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MUST WE IMPORT COAL?

AT the end of the first day's Debate on the economic situation, Sir Andrew Duncan, in a speech which rose high above the level of party polemics, put the case for the import of coal during 1947. That a leading industrialist could even raise this issue shows the real seriousness of our present crisis. Sir Andrew was able to show that, even if the Government's target figure of 200 million tons were reached, steel production might have to be cut back from its achievements in the last quarter of 1946. Certainly there could be no question of going forward to the level of output of which the industry is now capable. By thus, halting the progress of engineering, we should not only make it well-nigh impossible to achieve the export target of 140 per cent of the pre-war volume, but should retard the capital re-equipment of our transport system and basic industries. But re-equipment, as he rightly stressed, is essential if we are to sustain the export drive in a buyers' market. In conclusion, he reminded the House that if, by any mishap, this winter's close-down were repeated in a year's time, no explanation would suffice to appease the fury of the country.

Sir Andrew's case is all the more powerful because every alternative method for substantially increasing coal output this year has already been rejected. Professor Robbins' proposal that 50,000 Poles should be marched to the coal face has been dismissed by all those with real knowledge of the industry. What is required for an immediate increase in production are fully trained face-workers who can undertake not only coal cutting, but the reopening of the hundreds of productive seams closed during the war. Foreign labour can help to make good the annual wastage of miners by adding to the number of raw recruits, though the figures for British recruitment have in fact shown a most encouraging upward trend since Vesting Day. But even if, as the result of Mr. Shinwell's efforts, recruitment slightly exceeds wastage in 1947, this will only maintain production and not substantially increase it. For an increase, what is required is the return to the mines of the 30,000 fully trained miners now employed in other and more profitable occupations. Since the T.U.C. still sets its face against differential ration cards for miners and since shortage of housing will remain, despite the allocation of steel houses to mining areas, a considerable deterrent, there is no reason to hope that a rapid influx of ex-miners will appreciably improve our stock position next winter.

But if the number of miners at the face cannot immediately be increased, is there no method of increasing the output per man? In particular, should not the five-day week, promised for May 1, be postponed for a year? The answer to both these questions seems to be "No." The miners' effort to push up output per man has already exceeded all expectations. Granted a stop on the export of mining machinery, they should be able to sustain this effort throughout this year and to reduce still further the figure of absenteeism. But they are most unlikely to accept any postponement of the five-day week which at last offers them the prospect of becoming full members of civilised society. The engineer, even if he works on Saturday morning—and many do not—can go home, change and be out at the football match by three. The miner, if he works on Saturday, forfeits the holiday. He has probably tumbled out of bed at 5 a.m. and worked his shift with a 20-minute pause for his "snap." Then he must clean himself, eat, and sleep his exhaustion off before he is fit to meet his girl. In no other industry is the case for a five-day week as strong as in mining.

We should remember that, despite all the talk about the impossibility of totalitarian planning in a free community, the miner, like the agricultural worker, is still tied to his job, even if he is no longer tied to his pit. The N.U.M. has shown great restraint in not forcing this issue; but Mr. Horner knows perfectly well that, if, in addition to tolerating this infringement on the miner's liberty, he asks the men to accept a postponement of the central point in the Miners' Charter, they will refuse to follow him. Every effort will be made to prevent the introduction of the five-day week from decreasing output; and in the long run, it may actually increase it, since few miners in fact work a five-day week at present. But during the necessary reorganisation, which may take some months, no one can guarantee that a decrease of output will not occur.

We are therefore driven to the conclusion that, whatever the Coal Board may be able to achieve over the next five years, 200 million tons is an extremely optimistic estimate of the coal which can be mined in this country in the next twelve months. Even if the target is reached, it will not be sufficient to maintain industry in full production. This is the case for coal imports.

At the height of the crisis, Mr. Attlee rightly refused President Truman's offer to deflect American coal ships to Britain. Those shipments had been promised to other European nations, whose need is even greater than ours. European recovery is a vital British interest, and Europe requires most of America's export surplus if she is to be able to send us anything in exchange for the goods which we export to her. But are there not other sources of supply? South Africa is the most obvious possibility, and we believe that the Government would be well advised to obtain every possible shipment of coal from there.

It is futile to talk of an affront to our national pride. The false sense of prestige which has been the besetting sin of this Government's foreign policy must not stand in the way of realistic action in the vital issue of industrial fuel.

Sir Stafford Cripps' detailed coal budget for the summer months assumes a considerable reduction in the amount of coal available to industry. In another part of his speech he gave some hope that the Government was considering differential rationing of industry, despite the objection that this method of planning involved a reliance on concealed unemployment and consequently concealed direction of labour. But unless we are prepared for such "humiliating" expedients as coal imports and such drastic measures as differential rationing, we risk facing the crisis, when the dollars run out, even worse prepared than we were for the blizzard last February.

Negative Planning

This week's Debate, even more than the two White Papers, has emphasised the degree to which hopes, rather than positive plans, have gone into the paving of governmental policy for the crisis. It is hoped that the strain on our balance of foreign payments may be lightened by importing less from "hard" and more from "soft" currency countries, and by switching more of our exports to the dollar area; but no new controls will be imposed to bring about this redirection of foreign trade. It is hoped that there may be no need to curtail purchases, for dollars, of American tobacco and films. It is hoped that capital investment in new plant will increase; but no steps will be taken to restrict exports of electric generators or machine tools required for re-equipment. It is hoped by publicity campaigns to induce considerable numbers of women to return to industrial employment, to encourage an inflow of volunteers into the under-manned industries, to persuade the Lancashire football pools to dispense with man-power suitable for employment in textiles, and to make good overall shortage of man-power by imports of Displaced Persons. But women are given no assurance that the principle, which they demand, of the rate for the job will be recognized; no actual measures are suggested to forbid non-essential industries competing for scarce labour; and the end-1946 man-power budget indicates that it is "expected" that a considerable proportion of this year's meagre increment to the total labour force will in fact drift into non-essential occupations.

Freedom and Efficiency

In short, the general impression which the Debate has created is that, in its plans for shaping the pattern of Britain's crisis economy, the Government is relying predominantly on atmosphere and exhortation, while it retains in reserve negative controls. In the last resort, but not yet, it will restrict unwanted and marginal activities by limiting supplies of fuel, power and raw materials. To do more, to embark on detailed positive planning, would be inconsistent, Sir Stafford Cripps implied, with the freedoms essential to democracy. It is an argument which we find difficulty in following. By identifying positive with "totalitarian" planning, the Government is in fact placing in the hands of its opponents a weapon which will be used against it when it is forced by circumstances—as we are convinced it will be forced within the life of this Parliament—to interfere, much more drastically than it yet contemplates, with free enterprise and obstructive vested interests. In any case, "democracy" is an unconvincing excuse for crimes of omission. It is not a question of the imposition on the nation of a repugnant straight-jacket tailored by a tyrannical minority. What the country wants is a fairly detailed positive plan, with clearly defined priorities and targets, in whose furtherance a large measure of direction would be willingly accepted.

Wages and Living Costs

The hopes expressed by Sir Stafford Cripps, that in the "free" settlement of wage rates by normal bargaining employers and employed would "take a much broader view in the national interest," and that the under-manned industries would not repel recruits by unattractive conditions, are unlikely to be fulfilled in the absence of a reliable yardstick for the measuring of real wages. Before the trade unions can be expected to agree even temporarily to the freezing of wages in occupations to which it is not in the national interest to attract a larger labour force, they will want to know how the purchasing power of current wages really compares with those of 1938. It is idle for the Minister of Labour to refer to movements in a cost of living index which measures changes in the cost of a household budget based essentially on typical working-class expenditure before World War I, and which bears no relation to the comparative costs of satisfying to-day's normal needs. The case for an up-to-date, revised index figure of living costs will become all the stronger if the Chancellor's reference in this week's Debate to the need for measures, not deflationary, but aimed at "lessening the inflationary pressure," means that the forthcoming Budget is likely to include increased indirect taxation and a scaling down of the present subsidies for "pegging" the cost of living. It is hopeless to look for the voluntary adoption by industry of any sort of wage policy so long as the statistical data for assessing the value of nominal wages is so imperfect.

Moscow Amenities

The Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow opened with the usual personal bonhomie which does not disguise acute political differences. Mr. Molotov began by raising the question of China, involving, by implication, American intervention. Mr. Marshall retorted by proposing a discussion of the size of the Russian forces in Eastern Europe. Both questions are likely to be discussed privately by the Ministers. Mr. Bevin will also discuss with Stalin an extension of the Anglo-Soviet alliance, and he may regard as propitious Stalin's latest pronouncement which shows that he thinks that Engels and he may both have been wrong on occasion, and which emphasises the possibility of a *modus vivendi* between the capitalist world and a Communist Russia. The Ministers are unlikely either to reach complete accord or to fail to reach some agreement. After hard bargaining, an Austrian treaty is likely. Agreement on Germany will be more difficult. Mr. Molotov has begun by accusing the Western Powers of failure to de-nazify, on which he has a strong case, and failure to dismantle factories and pay reparations promised under Potsdam, on which the British can fairly retort that, unless Russia is willing to have a unified economic policy in Germany and to allow trade between East and West, the burden of a starving and de-industrialised Zone is more than either our pockets or our consciences can afford. The centre of the problem is the future of Western Germany. The French, who seem to have abandoned the demand for the political severance of the Ruhr, may yet lead the way to what is surely the correct solution, which is to set up an international supervising body over the Ruhr, so planning its socialised industry that it does not develop the war potential which all the rest of Europe fears, and does provide those consumers' goods of which all the Continent stands in desperate need. In exchange for them Eastern Europe might again be prepared to send its agricultural produce to Western Germany.

The Landtag Elections

The Landtag elections will take place in the British Zone next month under electoral systems drafted separately for each Land by the existing Landtag, consisting of nominated representatives. These elections are of particular importance, since the new legislative bodies will be charged with a number of functions previously reserved to Military Government. It is unlikely, however, that the electoral systems to be employed will produce an adequate reflection of public sentiment. On the initiative of the Christian Democratic Union, the electoral laws have been drafted to militate against the smaller parties and especially against the Communists. In Schleswig-Holstein, for instance, 42 seats will be given to candidates with a clear majority, while the remaining 28 will be allocated to candidates on a reserve list in which each party will be credited with the total votes cast for its unsuccessful candidates. But no candidate can secure a seat on the reserve list unless his party has won at least one constituency outright. This is a direct imitation of the system employed in the American Zone. In the Bavarian Landtag elections, each successful C.D.U. candidate needed only 15,000 votes on an average, while the Communists polled 185,000 votes and did not secure one seat. Though the Social-Democrats in Schleswig-Holstein dropped their initial objections to this system, it is possible that they, as well as the Communists, may be seriously embarrassed by its provisions. A further objection to the system is the admission of former members of the Nazi Party, the S.A., the Stahlhelm and other nationalist organisations as candidates "if they are especially useful for the democratic rebuilding of Germany." The British Regional Commissioner, Air Vice-Marshal de Crespigny, once rejected the electoral law for Schleswig-Holstein, but the Landtag again endorsed it and submitted it for British approval. It may be desirable to discourage German splinter parties, but this law weights the scales in favour of reaction.

America's Policy at Geneva

President Truman's assertion last week at Waco that the United States valued free enterprise even more than peace was part of an extraordinary speech. He drew a sharp distinction between trade organised by private persons, which led to peace and prosperity, and trade organised by government, which led to depression and war. Apart from the fact that this ignores the possibility of government acting in the interests of a community which includes traders, it is a strange reading of the events of 1914 or 1929. The American cure for the present growth of government interference in all the markets of the world is to demand a general lowering of tariffs at the International Trade Conference at Geneva. But President Truman hastened to add that he was no rash advocate of free trade, nor of the abolition of tariffs; he only advocated that America should make concessions in her tariffs in return for similar concessions from abroad. In fact, American exports were to be increased by proposing to increase American imports. But, the President added, if the increased imports harmed American domestic markets the concessions would be withdrawn. In realistic terms of the dollar situation in the world to-day this is sheer nonsense. At present American exports far outrun American imports; the deficit is financed by loans and gifts. If America expects that the loans will be repaid, or if she expects to stop making loans, she will have to reverse her whole balance of trade and become a net importing country in dollar terms. This may possibly be done by the painless process of heavy American tourist expenditure abroad, but it cannot conceivably be achieved by perpetual safeguarding of the internal market. While it is probable that the Truman administration understands the real situation it is shirking its duty to tell the American people the facts. There is no reason why the British delegation to Geneva should be parties to such deception.

Press Strike in France

The month-old printers' strike means, for French newspapers, heavy losses, which are particularly serious in the case of the Resistance press, whose capital and advertising revenue have never been substantial. In Left-wing circles in France the question is asked whether the printers, whose wages compare favourably with those in most industries, may not have received encouragement in their strike from interests hostile to the Resistance press. It is noted that on and after March 1st publication of a newspaper will no longer require official authorisation, so that even pre-war dailies which were suppressed as collaborationist after the Liberation, will be able to re-start. Their come-back, it is suggested, will be all the easier if the Resistance newspapers are landed by the strike in crippling financial difficulties. This danger—rightly or wrongly—is being linked by the Communist Party with the attitude of the Government to the co-operative distributing agency set up by the Resistance newspapers. The Treasury, it is said, is oddly slow in paying this agency 70 million francs which it owes for copies of journals it has purchased for export and for distribution in the French Zone.

PARLIAMENT: The Trough of Indecision

Wednesday

THIS week, as so often happens, the preliminaries were more interesting than the big occasion. Wednesday's Debate on the Tory Censure Amendment was a formal Party affair; whereas Monday's and Tuesday's freer discussion gave some play to those cross-bench currents of opinion which are the best indications of the shape of things to come. The House, as was clearly indicated in the Adjournment scenes late on Tuesday night, thought that it could have spent at least three further days in general debate, before marshalling itself in the rigid formations demanded by a Vote of Censure. Backbenchers felt this all the more strongly since well over half the time available had been occupied by front-bench spokesmen.

Sir Stafford Cripps' opening statement, despite its formidable length, was a masterpiece of presentation, equalled only by the speech from Sir Andrew Duncan which concluded Monday's proceedings. Both men have won the respect of the House because they possess an integrity which puts into somewhat shabby relief the oratorical effects of some of their colleagues. How embarrassed, for instance, was the expression on the faces of some of the Party hacks behind him when Sir Andrew, quite unconsciously, remarked: "The country will never forgive *us* if the coal crisis is repeated next winter." His speech, no less than that of the President of the Board of Trade, transformed the House on Monday into a real Council of State.

Yet the Debate never quite got down to business. For this Sir Stafford was partly to blame. The style and manner of his delivery could not entirely conceal an underlying flabbiness of content. By dismissing as "totalitarian," not only direction of labour, but every direct use of central power for controlling the means of production and distribution in the non-nationalized sector of industry, he avoided battle both with the T.U.C. and with the Opposition front bench. Naturally enough, Oliver Lyttelton and Sir John Anderson cordially welcomed this concept of "Socialism without tears," which, as Clem Davies for the Liberals pointed out, was almost identical with that put forward in the Coalition White Paper of 1944.

It was left to David Eccles to draw the unpalatable conclusion. Replying incisively to an ambiguous and uneasy intervention by the Chancellor—who seemed to think he could jolly the country into the idea that deflation under another name would smell less sour—Eccles demonstrated that "democratic" planning of this sort must in the end be subject to the old-fashioned laws of capitalist economics. Shall we yet see this able young banker as chairman of another May Committee?

Socialist criticism of the White Paper was—inevitably in the circumstances—half-hearted. Many Government supporters would have liked to take Eccles' argument in order to draw the opposite conclusion, as Bob Boothby did in an able speech which must have acutely embarrassed his own Party. But this issue must be fought out elsewhere. Meanwhile Fred Lee broke away from trade union orthodoxy and Ernest Millington argued briefly for a wage and profits policy. Jim Callaghan put a reasoned case for a reduction in the size of the Armed Forces which received an unreasoned reply from the Minister of Defence. But too many Members were content with the usual "Who Done It?" slanging match against the old Etonian rowdies opposite. This well-dressed and ill-mannered claque—to whose views Lady Grant gave support in a beautifully delivered maiden speech—seems to believe that its Design for Freedom consists in shouting "Gestapo" in chorus after dinner. It was lamentable that A. V. Alexander in winding up on the second day decided to shout back.

If the Cabinet still believes that the country understands the situation, it should re-read Hansard. The House and the country alike are still arguing pre-war controversies and both are uneasily aware that they are waxing hot about irrelevancies. Only the Government can change this. It will clarify the issue when it makes up its mind. At present it is making an experiment in Socialism under self-imposed terms of reference which make failure almost inevitable. Sooner or later it must either give up the experiment in exchange for a further American Loan, or change its terms of reference. At present it is drifting towards a crisis, clearly foreseen by a few of its opponents and supporters. Though everyone complains vaguely of a lack of leadership and a failure of public relations, the real fault, as Tuesday's debate clearly showed, is the absence of a collective mind in the Cabinet itself.

Wednesday's debate began badly for the Government. Mr. Churchill, looking like a parliamentary chef, served up a gallant repast. The rotund period, the sly aside, the jovial sally and the regretful indictment—nothing was lacking except a grain of responsibility. Arthur Greenwood followed him unconvincingly and Peter Thorneycroft regained the initiative for the Opposition where it remained until the Prime Minister rose. He disposed of Harold Macmillan with a single arrow and then proceeded to pierce Mr. Churchill's heavy armour with 20 more. A most finished parliamentary performance which delighted his supporters even if it did not dispel all their anxieties.

PHINEAS

WHERE IS BRITAIN?

MR. TRUMAN'S call to Congress to sanction United States intervention in Greece and Turkey carries the story of American post-war expansion a long stage further. Unlike America's occupation of the Pacific, the new advance is openly based on fear of Communism. The argument could be applied to almost any part of the world. America, on Mr. Truman's thesis, has an interest and duty to intervene wherever Communism or Soviet Russia might otherwise be influential. In Greece and Turkey Britain has been doing the job. America must now take over. The ground for this momentous decision has for some weeks been prepared in the American press.

According to most American newspapers, Britain is down the drain. Some regret it with the tolerant sympathy of the successful man embarrassed when an old associate goes bankrupt. Others are only concerned at the expense involved in maintaining an Empire which they have savagely attacked in the past but now think it necessary to take over. All comment is based on the assumption that Russia is aggressive and would occupy any vacuum created by British withdrawal. Talk of a preventive war, common a few months ago in military circles, has been dropped, partly because Russia, with a starvation harvest and grave internal economic difficulties, is obviously not immediately dangerous, and partly because dropping bombs on Baku would not defeat the Soviet Union but would compel the occupation of Europe by the Red Army. Though no third world war seems likely for ten years, America must see to it in the meantime that Communism makes no headway in a vital area.

Mr. Walter Lippmann, the most intelligent and reliable of weather-cocks, has clearly forecast this shift of policy. So far, he points out, Anglo-American policy since the war has been to strengthen by military and economic means all anti-Soviet forces round the vast circumference of the U.S.A. Hence American air-bases in Iceland and Europe, British troops in the Middle East, the rapid rebuilding of Japan and American occupation of strategic islands in the Pacific. This policy, Mr. Lippmann declares, is already breaking down because it demands more in money and men than America and Britain can afford. The first sign is in China, where America, though continuing, we believe, to send aid to the Kuomintang, has made a public withdrawal of men and money. Similarly, in the Mediterranean, the United States now finds that she can only rely on Britain acting as policeman against possible Slav encroachment in Greece if she herself provides economic aid. This is already the position in the Middle East, where British soldiers are supposed to guard the oil, while America pays for its development. Mr. Lippmann clearly sees the impossibility of maintaining such an economic and military strategy for a prolonged period, and he urges as an alternative that America should concentrate on building overwhelming strength at such key strategical points as Germany, Turkey and Japan.

When we consider the nature and tone of this argument, which too clearly confirms the deductions of the Marxian thesis of the inevitable capitalist-Communist clash, we can understand, even while we deplore, the character and virulence of Soviet propaganda. It is indeed a strange atmosphere in which to begin an international conference. America discusses the cheapest and surest way of arming against the hypothetical aggression of Russia; Mr. Bevin declares that "Britain's security lies in America," and the Russians that our intention is to cheat them out of reparations, to permit the rebuilding of the Nazi regime and to maintain the subject peoples of the world as tools of our imperial designs. From a conference with such a background one may expect at best agreements based on horse-trading. Russia has approved the American occupation of strategic islands not subject to the trusteeship authority of Uno, although her opposition here would have been supported by the British, by many Americans and by liberal opinion throughout the world. Presumably this concession, like her propaganda, is to prepare the way for future bargaining. But her propaganda has another aspect. It is followed with attention by the newly awakened nationalist and revolutionary forces which are appearing in every backward area and throughout the coloured world. Britain and America, thinking in strategic terms, find themselves supporting every feudal potentate in the Middle East, and involved in the intrigues of pre-war reactionaries in Eastern Europe. No policy could better suit Soviet propaganda, which, never particular about accuracy, is echoed in Communist propaganda in every country in the world. Mr. Henry Wallace, now comically smeared in America as a near-Communist, had a better idea of the right way to counter Communism. If America had been willing to spend her dollars in T.V.A.s for backward areas on the basis of Lend-Lease or long-term loans, she would have eased her own internal problem by creating an assured export market in the future, and she would have found herself in alliance with the new nationalist forces with whom, undoubtedly, the future of these countries lies. Rejuvenated nations, struggling to be free, would then have seen that good could come from the West, and might have preferred Western to Soviet influence. To the Republican leaders, however, such a doctrine was "starry-eyed." Instead, Mr. Truman is asking them to support regimes which detest all social change. A Congress, pledged to economy, knows that the attempt to bolster up all the anti-Socialist forces in Europe and Asia would cost billions of dollars.

The British people must face their unenviable position between these two great Powers, taking heart from the fact that neither Russian nor American policy is immutable, and that war between them is highly improbable during the next ten years. They should also realise that, if such a war does come, the position of this island is untenable. High American authorities have recently stated that London would be immediately wiped from the earth and the only use of Britain would lie in American air-bases on the East coast. Until we adjust our minds to these facts, no British Government can evolve a foreign policy. Our manpower shortage today compels a realism which, east of Suez, is bearing fruit in a policy that is both sensible and in conformity with the Labour Party's pledges. The next step should be to attempt to reach a tripartite oil agreement in the Middle East, and, immediately, at the

present Moscow Conference, to make an all-out effort to persuade the Russians and Americans to work with Britain to integrate German economy into that of Europe as a whole. This can be done if the Ruhr is put under international control and German industry developed on a large scale, not for the manufacture of armaments, but to make those innumerable light engineering products and consumers' goods that the whole of Europe wants. On that basis the fears of France and Eastern Europe would be abated; Britain and France should then be able to lead in creating a new European group whose interest it would be neither to belong to an American nor Russian *bloc*. Britain's second line of security would be, instead of making long-distance bombers, (at about £400,000 apiece) to reconstruct her own hard-hit industry and to educate the African peoples under her influence and aid them in developing the vast resources of their territories. If Britain were publicly to declare such a policy, stating that we, like the French, had no intention of developing the atom bomb, the atmosphere of international politics would be changed, and in addition to the two World Powers, a third Power, politically and economically independent, would be able to exercise a beneficial and peaceful influence.

ARMS AND ARITHMETIC

In the five years before the war the size of Britain's armed forces varied between 420,000 and 470,000, reaching the upper limit after Munich. The approximate numbers in each Service were: Army, 215,000; Navy, 135,000; and R.A.F., 100,000. On December 31st, 1946, the figure was 1,420,000, or just a million more. The Army then numbered 900,000, the Navy 180,000 and the Air Force 340,000. Criticism in precise terms of this enormous increase is difficult because of the care the Government takes to conceal the dispositions and details of its forces. Apparently peace is still not so certain as it was in 1938, when it was safe enough to publish in the Army Estimates locations and strengths of British garrisons throughout the world. But it is clear in the light of the prevailing manpower shortage that only two factors can explain the decision to retain a force twice as large in proportion to the population as that maintained by the United States. They are the extra commitments thrust on us by the aftermath of war and the need to avoid the perilous weakness of the 1930's.

Despite the Government's reticence, a reasonable guess can be made as to where some of the troops are—Germany, 120,000; Austria, 18,000; Greece, 15,000; Italy, 60,000; North Africa (excluding Egypt), 30,000; Japan, 3,000. That gives a total of 246,000 for areas with new commitments arising out of the war. So the remainder of the extra million must be in parts of the world where Britain has kept troops for generations. That is indeed the case. In 1935 there were 2,000 soldiers in Palestine, and as late as 1939 the total had not gone above 5,500. Today it is nearer 120,000. In the same period the garrison in Egypt never exceeded 10,000; now it is in the region of 60,000. In Malaya the numbers have gone up from 3,000 to 15,000. At home, from 1935 to 1939, there were never more than 112,000 men in the Army; today there must be at least 380,000. As the forces in India and Burma (58,000) are no more than pre-war, that gives a total of almost 450,000 additional soldiers in Britain and places long thought vital to British interests. Distributed among them are the 303,000 sailors and airmen not on the pre-war strength. The responsibilities of the British Empire, which claimed 450,000 men before the war, now demand 1,176,000 and will still need 830,000 on March 31st, 1948. This is on the assumption of the Defence White Paper that the Government will reduce the size of the forces to 1,087,000, largely, we presume, by withdrawing troops from occupied countries.

The necessity to show a reasonably bold front to the world can only require an extra 150,000 men at the outside, since the invention of the atom bomb and other improved techniques of waging warfare. Consequently the explanation for the remainder of the fantastic increase is threefold: inefficient organisation; enthusiastic collaboration with the Chiefs of Staffs, who are given no ceiling beyond which they cannot go in meeting their commitments; and the desire to keep a striking force in the Middle East to add weight to arguments at the peace conference. Are these weighty enough reasons to justify retention still in the forces of 150,000 conscripted men with over four years' service?

The charge of inefficiency may seem strange with a victorious Montgomery at the War Office. It can be readily substantiated on one ground alone. By the simple expedient of paying from ninepence to *1s. 6d.* a day, and offering other minor inducements, we used to have at call in the United Kingdom an Army Reserve of 180,000, composed largely of ex-regular soldiers with the second part of their twelve-year engagement not completed. There was also a Territorial Army which could be relied upon to supply anything up to 200,000 men. Because we had these reserves the home strength of the Army never went above 120,000. The absence of them makes the difference of 270,000. It is no answer to say that the millions of the demobilised are the modern Army Reserve. Once a man has gone through a Release Centre he has vanished for immediate military purposes and can only be found again through the slow machinery of the Ministry of Labour. Under the old system each man on the Reserve was labelled and assigned to a unit or a depot and obliged to report automatically to it in return for a small daily payment, which varied according to his grading, whenever a public announcement was made.

The extent to which the Army depended on this Reserve is shown by the pre-war payroll. It was made up of £10 millions in wages for serving soldiers and £7 millions for the right to produce a force nearly twice as large again in an emergency. The highest paid of the Reservists were obliged to report as often as the Army needed them, even if there were not an emergency in the accepted sense. The others were always a reservoir which could be immediately tapped. If the War Office, advised by its high staff officers, had taken the course of offering, say, *2s.* a day to the men about to be demobilised, in return for their acceptance of liability to be recalled when wanted, a vast Reserve, as large as any militarist could desire, would have been at hand. The expenditure would have been less than 1 per cent of the Defence budget, and 270,000 men could now be working in industry instead of blancoing their belts.

Another neglected method of cutting down garrisons is the use of Air Force squadrons to patrol areas traditionally guarded by land forces. That such action has not been taken, and that overseas establishments are swollen far above the peacetime levels, leads to the conclusion that the Chiefs of Staff have never been faced with cutting their coat to suit Britain's cloth. Mr. Attlee and his Minister of Defence are tough enough to have forced down the figure if that had been their serious intention. Instead, every indication suggests a happy collusion in which the Service chiefs have more men at their disposal for a longer period than they ever dreamt possible.

The hand of Mr. Bevin is visible in all this. If he cannot have coal at the conference table, at least he can delude himself that a million-and-a-half men justify the Palmerstonian touch. But soon the fool's paradise must come to an end because the Government has already committed itself to the proposition that no men called up after January 1st, this year shall serve for more than two years, and that none of them will be demobilised before those already serving. Such a promise cannot be broken without the gravest political repercussions. But, with the fresh call-up never going above 180,000 a year, the inevitability of arithmetic will bring in its train a reduction in the armed forces, because before long there will be no replacements for a combined strength exceeding 700,000 men—*i.e.*, 350,000 below the target for March 31st, 1948. And, by the time that happens, our commitments will be exactly the same, apart from the occupied countries.

One consideration may help the Government to look at unwelcome realities. The Defence budget is £900 million, as against £580 million in 1939 when rearmament was in full swing and the cost of the Civil Defence Services was also included. The Government might explain more clearly why we are spending three-quarters of the amount of the American loan on the armed forces in a peacetime year.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE BAD NEWS . . .

I

Cripps climbed to the stirrup, and Attlee and he;
Clem ambled, Hugh ambled, they ambled all three;
"Whoa back!" they exclaimed as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Whoa back!" boomed the Board of Trade echoing through;
Behind shut the postern; Millbank lay ahead,
They moved on the green lights and reined at the red.

II

Not a word to each other: they slowed down the pace,
Till the Abbey loomed up in its usual place,
And from Big Ben's high tower they heard the half chime,
And Hugh broke the hush with, "There's plenty of time!"
And Clem said, "Hold back, there's no hurry, stay spur!
Westminster must wait for we need to confer."

III

But "Gallop!" cried Cripps, "for our plan is agreed,"
And he leaned down and patted his T.U.C. steed,
Who eyed him askance with a horrified glare,
Then nibbled the grasses in Parliament Square.
But up in the saddle Sir Stafford arose,
Tapped his charger, and settled his specs on his nose,
Clapped his hands, laughed and sang, any noise bad or good,
Till into Westminster they clattered and stood.

IV

So there in the Commons Cripps bore the whole weight
Of the news which acquainted the realm with its fate,
As on the White Paper the House he addressed,
Which made waste White Papers of all of the rest;
(Clem and Hugh in the meantime went cantering on
And both trotted into the Chamber anon).

V

"The moment," Cripps said, "is undoubtedly dark,
The present is anxious, the future is stark,
But the future is grey if the present is black,
And nobody wants the Conservatives back.
The Government's planning is hardly to blame
And the remedy offered is more of the same;
A long-term emergency now has been planned
And planners will plan under Planning Command.
The crisis requires no emotional call—
We can stand fifty years with our backs to the wall."

VI

So "Forward!" Cripps cried, and the table he smote,
And presently carried a confidence vote,
And Members flocked round, and they cheered as of old,
(There is no one like Cripps when bad news must be told)
While the citizens said, giving Whitehall its due,
"In spite of all planning, we'll still muddle through."

SAGITTARIUS

A LONDON DIARY

BERTRAND RUSSELL ended his lucid commentary on the atomic broadcasts by saying that for mankind there is now only a choice between utter destruction and unimaginable prosperity. A world Renaissance was possible if we could achieve international ways of thought. His words had scarcely died away when the B.B.C. announcer stated that the atomic series would be concluded the next night by Sir John Anderson, whose subject would be "The National Interest." I do not think the B.B.C. intended to ridicule its own finest effort. The national habit of mind is unconscious and not easily overcome. In only one respect did I think Bertrand Russell failed to be adequate. Inspection is the key to international control, and in arguing about it the Russians talk shocking nonsense about "national sovereignty." But we must understand the military reason for their objection. Even if they believed (which they do not) that the American Senate would agree to share atomic secrets with them, they would hesitate to give up their chief defensive weapon, which is secrecy. They cannot make atom bombs and they have, in modern terms, no offensive weapon which could be used against America. But in the remote fastnesses of Siberia they can hide their factories. Inspection means for Russians providing the Americans with a complete map of all their military targets. Sir John Anderson added another point. Atomic warfare is only one and not the most terrible of the new weapons. Biological and bacteriological fighting would be still more terrible. Facing this with all the realism I can, my conclusion is that there is not now much to be done by formal agreements between Powers that do not trust each other, and that the one hope lies in their learning, during the next few years, to work together on the various jobs of food, communications, sharing of raw materials and so forth, where Western and Soviet interests coincide. Stalin's article emphasising that Communism could live side by side with world capitalism is some encouragement.

* * *

How many of the women who go about in fur coats realise that most of the beasts whose skins they wear died in the most extreme physical agony? They are nice to their dogs and cats, but they do not see in front of them the squirrels, foxes and coneys caught in steel traps, maddened by pain, biting their legs off or dying slowly by starvation. The point may be brought home to them if one of their own dogs or cats is caught in a steel trap in our own countryside. And here for us is an immediate issue. Steel traps were forbidden before the war, and permitted under Government regulation as a war exigency. The new Agricultural Bill now proposes to continue granting power to the Government to suspend the law on this point. The pretence, as usual, is that rabbits are a pest that cannot otherwise be put down. This is precisely the opposite of the truth. The rabbit population deprives the farmer of an astonishing amount of grass; it has been calculated that half a dozen rabbits eat more than a sheep. But if we want to keep them down—we shall never exterminate them—that can be done by a large scale and reasonably painless gassing operation. If we want rabbit meat and rabbit fur, they can be produced on proper rabbit farms. The trapper's object is to encourage rabbits; he makes his living out of carefully preserving them. I am glad to see that the agitation against this clause in the Bill has reached promising dimensions, and there is hope of its being struck out.

* * *

The decline of the British Empire is progressing ever faster in the United States press. A recent clipping from the *Chicago Tribune* reveals that "the Scots" are petitioning Uno for freedom, on the grounds that the treaty of 1707 is now outmoded and should be reconciled with the Uno pledge to promote freedom for all peoples. I had supposed that not even Col. McCormick took this line quite seriously till the London manager of a big American firm told me that he had received a confidential query from his American office: "in view of the likelihood of Scottish independence can you let us know if it is likely to remain in the sterling bloc?" Perhaps here is a solution to our economic problems. Instead of this petty deal by which we sell all our Scotch whisky to America why not be bold and imaginative and sell Scotland itself, letting the lock and stock go with the barrel?

* * *

Until this week I have been unable to satisfy inquirers who ask for a reliable and comprehensive picture of the "German problem." Many people have only the most scrappy notion of the economic and political differences which divide the Occupying Powers now meeting in Moscow. Is a centralised German administration either desirable or possible? Can agreement be reached about reparations or the German frontiers? Those who, like myself, have been trying to sort out these questions, on the basis of American, French, British, Soviet statements (most of which are propaganda) must feel really grateful for the topical memorandum just published by the Union of Democratic Control. (*Germany and the Moscow Conference*. From 34, Victoria Street, S.W.1. Price 1s.) This sets out the policy of the Powers fairly and clearly and suggests certain practical issues upon which decisions and, preferably, agreement must be sought. I have seldom seen a pamphlet so informative and so reasonable. A useful, but much less comprehensive summary of the German issue, written from a strongly Social-Democratic point of view is also published by the Fabian Society (*The Future of Germany* by Anne Whyte, sixpence).

* * *

Dr. Coulton, of whose death I hated to read last week, was one of the great Cambridge figures when I was an undergraduate there after the first world war. Browsing one day in the Union library, I picked up a book which consisted of a violent onslaught on the inaccuracy and prejudice of the Abbé Gascoigne's account of the Reformation. At the end of the book a number of blank pages were left—left for the replies which Coulton at each stage of his indictment had demanded, but not received from the Abbé. Coulton, a most accurate scholar, was infuriated by the dishonesty of some Catholic apologists and pursued them with a vigour and pertinacity which was wonderful to watch. It was because Coulton was not "remote and ineffectual" that Belloc was roused to his classical anathema of the Don who dared "attack his Chesterton." The last of his bouts with Rome took place only last year when he took up the cudgels for Dr. Simcox, who in this journal and elsewhere convicted the Church of misrepresenting its own doctrine for political purposes. As a lecturer and writer on the Middle Ages Coulton was altogether delightful. Vitriolic on paper, he was in personal intercourse the kindest of saints.

* * *

Sir Halford Mackinder was another great academic figure but, unlike Coulton, he belonged to the outside world of affairs. He was a great geographer, but his historic importance is as the unconscious founder of *Geopolitik* adopted and perverted by Haushofer, Hess and Hitler. The original lecture on which the superstructure was built was delivered in 1902. The full thesis was published at the time of the Versailles Peace Conference under the title of *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. I know of no more fascinating enquiry or speculation to-day than the thesis that civilisation only grows on the sea-coast of the great land masses, and that Eurasia, the great "heart-land" of manpower, is the unconquerable centre of a sort of solar system which leaves all the rest of the world, including North and South America, as so many island planets. How far the development of air power has made Mackinder's general thesis out of date is not yet clear.

Some ill-informed speculations have appeared in the press about the size of the weekly reviews. I cannot speak for the other journals of opinion, which do not publish net sales certificates. The last published weekly average figure for this journal was 85,000, over a period of six months. Each copy of a weekly review is read by at least five and probably more people. My own estimate is that about half a million people read THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION every week. Readers come from all sections of the community and include, I think, a very large number of Conservatives. It seems unnecessary to make any further comment on the silly suggestion, which I have seen reported again recently, that the readers of weekly journals are a few intellectuals.

* * *

Henry Wallace is one of the few men in the world who really stands in the public mind for a great constructive idea. I knew that the announcement of his visit to England would arouse great interest in London, in Manchester where he is to speak at a big meeting on Saturday, April 12th, and throughout the country generally. But I did not expect that the tickets for the Central Hall meeting on April 11th would be nearly sold out within five days of the announcement, nor that I should be besieged with so many offers of sometimes unwanted publicity. It is hard to persuade innumerable societies all over the country that in a ten-day visit Wallace will not have time to address them, and that, apart from two or three public appearances, his visit will be a private one. The entire world's press, including fashion papers—which will amuse Wallace, who has never specialised as a dandy—demand the *entrée* to his press conference. The newsreel people will be disappointed if he does not appear as a film star. Requests have come in from colour photographers, motor-car hirers, gramophone experts, who wish to record the whole meeting; firms who print streamers and banners, and designers of exhibition display stands who wish to embellish the Central Hall, while choirs (who will also be disappointed) welcome the speaker with the Hallelujah chorus. I suspect that the audience will come to hear Wallace and Priestley speak.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to H. Flammger.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Temporary Lieutenant John Thomas Wardle, of H.M.S. *Lochinvar*, was ordered by a naval court-martial at Rosyth to-day to forfeit three months' seniority, to be dismissed from H.M.S. *Lochinvar* and severely reprimanded.

He pleaded guilty to taking his lunch and drinking with five ratings on Christmas Day aboard the minesweeper 1060, which he commanded.—*Evening Standard.*

An alarm bell has been installed in the inquiry office of the Doncaster Corporation Housing Department. When, as occasionally happens, an applicant for a house becomes abusive and threatens the girl clerk, a touch of the bell will bring male clerks from another room to her assistance.—*Manchester Guardian.*

The Archbishop of York has appointed the Rev. D. J. Hill to be Church of England chaplain at Butlin's camp at Filey, Yorkshire.

The announcement emphasises that the Filey appointment has been made by the Archbishop and not by Mr. Butlin.—*Daily Herald.*

Clothing worn by the rural dean of Bletchley, the Rev. C. A. Wheeler, caught fire during a clergymen's service in Leighton Buzzard parish church yesterday. The back of the surplice was set alight by a candle while a hymn which referred to "the consuming flames of sin" was being sung. The flames enveloped the back of the surplice without the rural dean noticing it.—*The Times.*

INDIA—WHAT NEXT?

FOUR days of debate in both Houses of Parliament have recapitulated all the arguments for and against the decision to hand over power in India in June, 1948. That decision is irrevocable and presents the only way in which the Indians can be forced to work out a solution for themselves. Officially the hope is that imminence of the British withdrawal will jolt Congress and the Muslim League into some working agreement before they are left as the sole legatees of authority in British India. But the chances of this are slender if both parties maintain their present attitude.

Mr. Jinnah, although his view may not be shared by all his supporters, is implacably resolved that Congress is so untrustworthy that no good could come from associating with it in the Constituent Assembly. Congress action in the forming of procedural rules for the Assembly did little to allay his fears. It has already been laid down, for instance, that the suggestions of the Advisory Committee on minorities will be binding on all the sections when approved by the Assembly. As the Committee, like the Assembly, is Congress-packed, this means that a variety of arrangements, including provisions on electoral law, could be made valid in areas with a Muslim majority where something quite different had already been decided.

Another curious innovation is the granting of the right to Provincial Legislatures to formulate their views on the wisdom of forming group constitutions before their particular section finally goes ahead with the scheme. In other words, the entire argument about grouping can be opened all over again. In this atmosphere it is unlikely that a detailed Constitution will be worked out in fifteen months despite the encouraging overtures Nehru is now making to the Muslim League to bury the hatchet.

Nor, in its present terms, will paragraph 10 of the White Paper help to promote concord between the major communities. The indication in it that authority may be distributed between the Centre and the Provinces, to say nothing of other areas, will encourage Muslim League intransigence. The carnage of Amritsar and Lahore already shows clearly their intentions in the Punjab. The more success the Muslim League has in its disruptive activities, the more determined it will be to make no concessions with the British still there.

Our endeavour must be to minimise strife in every way possible, both before and after departure. In the time left there is no opportunity, even if it were desirable, to set up a properly constituted Pakistan on an orderly basis. If there is to be any division in India it must be sorted out by India herself. Our task is to hand over the Central Government system intact to the Interim Government. Congress has wisely dropped the demand that the Muslim League Ministers should resign, and that aids the Viceroy in inducing them to stay in. If they know that only by staying in will they get a share of the power, the attractions of disruption will lose their force. They should be warned that if they no longer hold their portfolios by June of next year, the power will be given to the Congress Interim Government, on which the onus would then fall of reaching a settlement with the Muslim League—whatever constitution had been produced by the Constituent Assembly.

To emphasise the determination that they will transfer power intact, the British should say immediately that it is impossible to hand over the Indian Army to anyone but a Central Government. To dissuade Congress from using this advantage unfairly, a rider should be added: British troops must be utterly isolated from further contact with communal disturbances. India must learn while she still can, in comparative tranquillity, that the problem of law and order is one to be dealt with by Indians.

But in this changing scene an accurate forecast of the conditions in June, 1948, is impossible. It may be that disintegration will have already set in so far that a transfer of Civil Government machinery centrally will be impossible. To meet this difficulty and still keep up the pressure on the Muslim League to co-operate with Congress, the British should declare unequivocally that complete authority cannot be handed over to any Provincial Government in a province where the minority amounts to nearly half the total population. The Muslim League must be quickly disillusioned of the belief that they could capture the whole of Bengal and the Punjab through our good offices. On the same principle, which might prevent complete power from being given to Congress at the centre because the British cannot be a party to imposing a constitution on unwilling parts of the country, the Muslim League should only get control of the areas where they are in undisputed majority. In effect, Bengal and the Punjab would be partitioned, entailing the loss of so much in industrial potential and agricultural productivity, that Pakistan would no longer seem worth while.

If the Government is not willing to define such a course of action in the near future, civil war and mass terror will be the portion for the second half of 1948. India will not thank us to carve her up on our own initiative. If it were done fairly it would make permanent enemies of the Muslims. If favour were shown to the Muslims, the Hindus would be ranged bitterly against us for all time. Every effort must be made to see that any carving-up there may be comes from Indian action alone.

WOODROW WYATT

PLAN FOR PLANNERS—II.

THE conclusions of the first part of this article, published last week, were that effective economic planning must be thorough, even if its field has in consequence to be restricted; that for carrying it out a new Ministry (on the lines of the wartime Ministry of Production) is needed; and that the Government must either plan positively or had better not plan at all. In an economy based still, to the extent of 80 per cent, on private enterprise, negative planning—the imposition simply of restrictive controls and "fair share" rationing—may produce the worst of two worlds; and a mere statement of desirable ends is apt to be sterile if the means are left to be decided by a multiplicity of individual interests. There must be, as in wartime, a supreme economic command. The proposed Joint Planning Staff, headed by a Civil Servant, is a step in the right direction; but it is not an effective substitute. Only a senior Cabinet Minister can co-ordinate Departments, whose Ministers, *pace* Mr. Attlee, cannot enjoy autonomy without creating frictions destructive of any detailed plan.

Yet, in practice, the alternative to detailed operational planning is not open to us. Theoretically, the planners might throw up the sponge: we might revert to *laissez-faire*. But even if we were to waive political and social objections to the pattern of England which *laissez-faire* would produce, when it had done its work, it is not only Socialists who see that, in our present situation, the abandonment of planning would mean an immediate economic anarchy from which our civilisation might fail ever to recover. Planning, then, there has to be. But the wartime analogy must not be pressed too far: there is a sharp distinction between wartime targets and those at which we must set our sights today.

The purpose of war planning was to secure, quite simply, the maximum concentration of manpower in the Services and in the industries catering directly for their needs. Today the planners' aims are not directed towards such a simple, single target. Indeed, the White Paper sets up an embarrassingly long row of targets, at all of which we are asked, it would seem, to set our sights simultaneously. There are to be bigger exports and larger capital investment. At the same time, shortages of consumers' goods are to be filled, and social development—houses and schools—are to have an undiminished call on our resources, without prejudice to our ability to maintain over 1,500,000 men in the Services and munitions. Before any effective detailed planning can be done, priorities must be assigned in this list of aims. We are likely to miss all the targets if we aim at all of them indiscriminately.

But there are deeper differences between wartime and peacetime planning. In the first place, the limiting factor today is shortage not so much of manpower as of materials. When the dollar credits are exhausted, there will be no Lend-Lease in their stead. Secondly, the sort of economy which a British "Monnet Plan" must seek to produce is not the wartime pattern whose ruthless disregard of normal satisfactions was accepted only with an enemy in the Channel Ports. Today, though increased exports and equilibrium in our balance of foreign payments are immediate or medium-term objectives, the ultimate end in view is to make the most of scarce materials and a labour force which can be somewhat increased by cutting the Services, but is bound to be, on a long view, relatively static in size, and whose distribution, as between civil occupations, cannot be greatly changed without revolutionary modification of our conceptions of what constitutes normal peacetime life in these islands. To meet immediate needs, workers may be temporarily imported from abroad; as an obligatory, interim measure, this or that fresh austerity may have to be imposed. But these are not the *purposes* of planning. A three-year or five-year plan makes sense only if the aims of the planners are seen to be to raise the existing population's standard of life and satisfactions.

Here, in parentheses, let it be noted that one complication confronting planners today is that the extent of real demand is hidden by the artificial nature of present market conditions. Inflated purchasing power is balanced both by savings propaganda and by various administrative restrictions—rationing and variable, deterrent purchase taxes—on consumption. Frequently there is a rush to buy articles which suddenly appear in shops, not so much because of their intrinsic desirability as because there is nothing much else to buy, or because these particular goods have hitherto been scarce. The psychology summed up in a woman shopper's dictum—"Nothing's worth having unless it's what you have to queue for"—is widespread. Correct forecasting is therefore vital to planning.

With this proviso, the target remains, as has been said, the improvement of living standards—in other words, increased availability of goods, for export *and* consumption, by means of greater production. And this means not just "working harder"; the output of too large a proportion of labour is determined by the speed of the machine, and too few of the occupied population can achieve more by increased personal exertions for that slogan to have much real meaning. What is demanded is a greater efficiency in the use of our resources in manpower and materials.

The implications, then, of a plan aimed at maximum national efficiency have got to be faced—particularly when there are certain vital shortages in sight. It becomes a question not merely of fixing priorities as between different industries or types of production. (That factor, of course, arises. In view of our shortage of fuel, power and steel, is it feasible to support so large a metal and engineering industry as we have today? Is it rational to take no further steps to restrict future expansion of distributive and consumer services, or above all, of the Armed Forces and their supplying industries, when, even if the labour budget for 1947 is realised, there will still be large sectors of productive industry glaringly undermanned?) But, these issues apart, increasing national production and closing, without the destructive process of deflation, the present gap between purchasing power and goods available, means concentrating output with the most efficient producers within each industry. Only by these means can we succeed in securing maximum economy in the use of the two things of which we are shortest—fuel and materials.

This being so, it becomes manifest that the Government may be compelled by force of circumstances to face up to two consequences. First, the rationalisation of production which is called for will require not merely the imposition of the broad, slow-acting and largely negative controls, which, as we have seen, remain in the Government's hands, but the application in detail of a "sensitive" system of priorities which only a Ministry of Planning, with a top-ranking Member of the Cabinet at its head, could operate. The weapons in the hands of the Treasury are inadequate. Taxation and stimulation of savings can do something to keep within limits the slice of the national income swallowed up by consumption. But dearer money and the traditional techniques of deflation, for whose application City Editors are calling, are quite incompatible with the maintenance of full employment, to which the Government is pledged. The real task is to *increase* the national income by more efficiently planned output.

Secondly, we must face the fact that securing the economic use of concentrated output, while preserving the advantages of competition from within and outside an industry, may represent a compromise so difficult as to be unattainable. One paradox of planning is that, if it operates in an economy based on private enterprise, it may only too easily create, for existing producers, monopoly rights which are socially intolerable. The case against leaving in private hands a vested monopoly created by rationalisation would be all the stronger if the State, in order to secure efficient use of limited fuel and manpower, had to shoulder a ponderous burden of compensation payments to high-cost firms shut down.

What follows? Clearly that, with every step which the Government is compelled to take in the direction of operational planning, it will become progressively more advisable, indeed imperative, to extend the sector of nationalised industry. That is the inescapable consequence of the sort of planning which as a nation we cannot avoid undertaking and which cannot, without disaster, be halted half-way. Who rides a tiger must never dismount. AYLMER VALLANCE

THE FRENCH WAR

(From a Correspondent in Saigon)

AFTER almost 18 months of post-war turmoil, massacre and looting, Franco-Vietnamese relations in Indo-China have deteriorated into an open clash involving the reinforcement of a costly French expeditionary force. There is more mistrust, bad feeling and hatred in northern parts of this country today than ever existed before the *modus vivendi*, born of desperation rather than good will, was signed on September 14th, 1946.

There are thousands of idle acres, unattended paddy fields, rubber and coffee plantations from Cochin China in the South to Tonkin in the North. South-East Asia and China can expect little rice from Indo-China this year. Most of Cochin China's normal exportable surplus of between 250,000 and 300,000 tons is already earmarked for domestic consumption. Many labourers are fighting instead of sowing and reaping harvests. Flood water has yet to be drained.

A fuel famine threatens. Damage to the Hon Gay coal mines has reduced production to one-third of the pre-uprising output. There is no real restoration of road and rail transport. Stretches of line have been torn up. Bridges are down. Some roads are mined, some gashed with trenches 10ft. wide, some blocked by felled trees. It is only safe to drive through Indo-China in convoy. The French hold the towns and cities; the Vietnamese occupy the countryside. No-man's-land is sometimes several miles deep.

The Vietnamese are revising geography, burning villages off the face of the map in thorough application of "scorched earth" tactics. French bombs and shells are doing heavy damage to property. Parts of Hanoi are a shambles. Haiphong is scarred and battered. Livestock has disappeared from many sectors. People—civilians as well as soldiers—are being killed every day. The news is not always in the communiqué—a planter is shot, a lorry goes up on a mine, a guard is stabbed, a grenade leaves three dead, an Operation produces 100 corpses.

The French infantry soldier who would have been killed by the Vietnam sniper if he had not fired first wonders what it is all about. He is sick and tired of war—its filth and fox-holes and hard biscuits and noise. He has had six years of it fighting Italians, then Germans, from North Africa to Italy, from Italy to France, from France to Berlin. Now he is fighting Vietnamese in Indo-China in perhaps the roughest and dirtiest and most nervous business of all. His wife and two children are in Paris. He has never seen his year-old son. He searches his mind and heart for the causes of this bloodshed and destruction and separation from his family. So does the youngster ferrying bombs in the 15-year-old Junkers. He thought the curtain dropped on operations when he shouted "bombs away" on his seventieth mission over Europe. So do the casualties being evacuated by air to Saigon.

The French Army in Indo-China—more than 80,000 men—includes infantry, airborne, commando, mechanised, artillery, armoured and cavalry units. It includes native troops, colonial troops and veterans of the Foreign Legion. The famed Ninth Infantry Division, re-formed and supplemented by attached formations, is in the North where guerrilla warfare often flares up into small-scale pitched battles. Former British Spitfires carry 250-lb. bombs. Bombs are heaved out of the side door of the slow, antiquated Junkers. The French also have 105-millimetre artillery, anti-tank guns, Honey tanks, half-tracks, mortars, light and heavy machine-guns and even German grenades (the men say they are not much use) brought from the Reich after the surrender in Europe. There is little opportunity for a big "build-up" as the bulk of supplies still comes by air from Haiphong. Road convoys have recently increased the flow.

The French are thin on the ground. If there is no alternative to the restoration of peace by force, M. Marius Moutet, Minister for Overseas, estimates it will take at least 150,000 men. Other quarters believe nearer 500,000 French troops will be needed.

The Vietnam Army, which has a different system of command to that known to the West, has 50,000 trained troops, mostly round Hanoi, 20,000 mixed troops in Annam and, in Cochin China, has 8,000 to 10,000 trained troops mostly concentrated in the Plaine des Joncs, a marshy area north-west of Saigon. It has also some 50,000 to 60,000 irregular or militia troops (usually referred to by the French as "bandits.")

The Vietnam Army has no aircraft. It has a few ack-ack guns which can be, and are, used in a ground role. It has three or four 75-millimetre weapons which are silent most days to avoid detection from the air. The Vietnamese also have mortars, light and heavy machine-guns and grenades of French, Japanese and local manufacture. Some of their small arms were dropped by an American special force for use against the Japanese in July, 1945. Others were smuggled across the border from Yunnan in South-West China. Others were handed over by, or seized from, the Japanese.

There is much talk in French Indo-China of Japanese fighting with the Vietnamese, of Japanese methods being apparent in Vietnam offensive and defensive fighting, of Japanese training women and boys in the most effective form of guerrilla warfare. One French military spokesman estimated there were at least 2,000 Japanese, including one general officer, fighting with the Vietnamese. A neutral observer put the Japanese strength at "not more than 800." Although "Japanese" corpses have been listed in communiqués, it is extraordinarily difficult without a tape measure to tell a dead Japanese from any one of half-a-dozen other dead Asiatic nationals.

It is possible to walk one-quarter of a mile through the heart of Hanoi without being exposed or seen from the street. Houses are connected by holes driven through the brick and plaster walls. There are slits big enough for a rifle instead of windows. From attics and cellars, from living-rooms and coal bunkers the Vietnamese sustained a fanatical resistance to the French advance. For a while a single room was a useful capture; a few blocks of houses a real victory. Many Vietnamese literally fought in the rubble to the last bullet and the last breath. And before pushing on the French had to examine every closet and every chest. Vietnamese with grenades had already been caught in sewers and cemeteries, under beds, up chimneys. Occasionally a force of 300 to 500 attacks openly, whooping and howling at the pitch of their voices. But the Vietnam Army is skilled in defensive warfare—in erecting formidable barriers and other road obstacles, in laying mines, in blowing bridges and disrupting communications primarily to isolate French garrisons.

The Army is relatively well organised. And it has a fairly efficient propaganda machine. "Why are you fighting for France?" asked leaflets circulated among Germans and other non-French personnel serving in the Foreign Legion. No more than several dozen desertions, however, have been recorded. When the fighting broke out in Hanoi on the night of December 19th orders were immediately sent to Commanders in the South to "Rise against the French." But the orders were not obeyed. Perhaps the South was apathetic. Perhaps the forces there were not sufficiently well organised or disciplined or armed. Perhaps there were symptoms of a schism between the North and the South on Vietnam policy. There are millions of natives in French Indo-China wondering—just like the French infantry soldier—what this violent eruption is all about.

REPORTER IN GREECE

(The writer of the following notes on Greece is Special Correspondent of *Ce Soir* and staff contributor to *La Marseillaise* and *La Tribune des Nations*. During a recent extensive visit to Greece he was the first foreign journalist to make contact with the Andartes.)

ATHENS. In the centre of the city the tall stone buildings, whose tenants enjoy electricity and running water, the shop windows well stocked with goods of all sorts—these give the foreigner an illusory impression of wealth and easy living. But the centre of the city is only a fraction of Athens, and the prices of the goods displayed are staggering. You are looking in fact, at an official black market; for many of the articles come from Unrra and Naafi stores. A few steps from the centre of the city, you come to districts where living conditions are primitive in the extreme and misery universal. A brief stay in those districts is an eye-opener. Within a quarter of an hour's walk from the British Embassy, round whose walls life seems to flow normally and peaceably, terrorist raids are going on. These are the work of X-ites, the Monarchist bands. At the foot of the Acropolis, at Asyzmatos, I watched an armed band of X-ites looting two houses and murdering a 24-year-old butcher. His name was Saklarez Demetrios. Uniformed policemen watched the proceedings with broad grins on their faces. When it was all finished, they joked and chatted in a friendly way with the X-ites.

The wretched people who live here are mostly adherents of E.A.M. Its leader, Partsalides, is convinced that free elections would yield in Athens a sweeping majority for the Parties in the E.A.M. *bloc*. Such is not the view of the Monarchists and the Right-wing Republicans who comprise the Coalition Government. Ideologically it is a solid Coalition. Papandreon and Kanellopoulos, like Tsaldaris and Gonatas, have one political ambition—victory at all costs over the "rebels" in the mountains. Both wings of the Coalition are united in relying on British support to help them

attain that victory, and in believing that there is no case for "liquidating" former collaborators, many of whom hold high posts in the police, the army and the administration. "Their attitude in the anti-Communist campaign is very proper," I was told. Neutral in that campaign, sandwiched between Governmental and E.A.M. *blocs*, there are only the old Liberal Party of Sophoulis and a few individuals of note, such as Tsouderos, Sophianopulos and the Socialist leader, Svolos—none of whom has any mass following.

* * *

The Greek Army. For six days I lived with troops of the regular forces in the front line, at Calambaca, at the foot of the famous Meteorite Monasteries in Western Thessaly. My first impression was the lack of care they took of their arms and equipment—all provided by the British taxpayer. There met me a military policeman astride a motor-bicycle with a damaged gearbox, which he declined to take any steps to have repaired: "Why bother?" he said, "when the English are rich and will let me have a new one when mine finally packs up." Everywhere I found supreme trust in the inexhaustible wealth of England. As for "turn-out," the soldiers told me that the reason why they never washed their shirts was because the whole of the soap ration went, through the hands of their officers, into the black market. True? Well, at 4 p.m. on January 4th in Acropolis Street in Athens, I personally saw a Greek lieutenant selling British battledresses in the black market. It is observable too that Greek officers, whose monthly pay ranges from 100,000 to 300,000 drachmas, manage to afford daily restaurant meals costing 12,000 drachmas. Their personal budgets, one infers, must include "supplementaries."

At Calambaca the morale of the troops was low. Most of them were longing for rapid demobilisation; they went into action with manifest lack of enthusiasm, and frequently said in front of their officers that "killing their brothers" was not to their taste. In the course of a skirmish, which I witnessed, in the market place of Benavoulia—a village near Calambaca—most of the troops on the Government side could be seen, heads well down to the ground, firing blindly in the air.

Some of the soldiers who had fought with E.L.A.S. in the resistance were regarded with dark suspicion by their officers: past service with E.L.A.S. meant that they were Communists. Certainly the numbers of "missing" in the fighting were remarkably high and must have included many who had taken advantage of a favourable opportunity to desert to the Andartes. By way of contrast, however, the company to which I was attached contained a number of fervent Monarchists in the ranks. They were fighting the Andartes with gusto; and their chief complaint was that the British were not helping them enough. Sergeant Nicolas Bouras (private address: 39 Aktion Street, Thysion) told me roundly that the British were not such good anti-Communists as the Germans, whose departure from Greece he deplored.

None of the officers I met had taken any part in the resistance, though some had joined the Free Greek Forces in Egypt. Others had collaborated with the Germans. There was talk among the officers of atrocities committed by the Andartes; but the talk seemed to me to lack conviction—not surprisingly, perhaps, since the garrison of Calambaca included two officers, a Greek lieutenant and a Major Peters, British liaison officer, who had been taken prisoner by the Andartes and released unscathed.

The soldiers told me that they had all been compelled to vote for the King at the Plebiscite. They added that when they sang "We are going to plant our flag over Sofia and Moscow," they had not any real idea of carrying out such a mission. The song was ordered by their officers.

* * *

The Andartes. For five weeks I lived with the Andartes and the civil authorities established by the "rebels," on Mount Olympus, in the Khassia district of Thessaly and in the hills of Pieria and Vermion in Macedonia. I met their leading generals, Kikitzas and Kissavos, and took part in some considerable engagements. My abiding impression was that the Andartes consisted exclusively of Greek peasant volunteers who had taken to the hills, not light-heartedly but as the one means of escaping from Monarchist terrorism against their homes. I have in my notebook a list of the names and addresses of a dozen new recruits who turned up in a single day at Karia. All young peasants, they had committed no crime except that of incurring the dislike of the local petty dictators in whose hands, in Greece today, rests the High Justice, the Middle and the Low. All except one, who was too young, had taken part in the Resistance. Three had been members of the Agrarian Party, which was merged in E.A.M. The rest belonged to no political party. Most of them had escaped from Monarchist gaols.

In Thessaly and Macedonia, the Andartes control a large area, for they are the undisputed masters of the whole of the mountain *massifs*. In the villages in their zone they are making every effort to pursue a policy of reconciliation, and are even careful not to exclude Monarchists from the municipal councils. In all the villages through which I passed I found the clergy supporting the Andartes; and I can acquit them of any guilt in carrying out reprisals—even against the families of the Monarchist police, numbers of whom admitted to me that they had been well treated by the Andartes and had nothing of which to complain.

"We shall lay down our arms and go back to our homes and our work when terrorism in Greece is ended, when a democrat can hope to live in peace, when our fellow citizens in gaol and on 'the islands' have been liberated and when we have an assurance that our country will be independent and free." That, as I left the Andartes, was the parting message given to me by General Kikitzas.

JEAN DURKHEIM

MONEY

I FIRST saw this extraordinary beggar in Nice, in the middle of this winter. But first an explanation of the circumstances.

Worse than war, more vicious than most vices, the inflation of a money corrodes the very heart and blood of a town—if by these we mean a town's people. The architecture stands firm, the weather repeats its familiar phases, flowers bloom and the dust descends no more heavily than usual; yet each of these continues its existence emptily without refracting the life of the people, for life pulses slower, people hide their empty pockets behind shutters, the cafés are never full, the electric brilliance of shop windows bathes with a terrible vacancy those carefully gilded tickets of such insolent price. And in the markets the meat looks deader than ever. It is, it is much older.

So it was in the winter of the first post-war year, in Nice, in the postcard city of pink and green, lazing its semi-circle of wedding-cake hotels like sugar-icing round the deep blue Bay of Angels. Palms and cactus still sprouted their dusty green—but prices were up: an echo of past opera still hung faded on those French streets echoing Italy—but the franc was an unlovely thing of fresh paper; green southern trams belled their way down the warm air of the boulevards, under the plane-trees—yet in the strange shine of several new limousines—a bright passing of reposeless faces betokened the advance of the *marché noir*; old yellow houses and their orderly grey shutters stood back tiled in tropical gardens—yet there were rentiers who had owned them standing threadbare outside paper-shops; the meat market and the flower market were busy and bright-coloured—yet the shopping bags left half-full and the brightness was less in the buying than in the call to buy. In all, a half-life was being lived. A half-life in the streets—with the other half behind shutters; a half-life in the shopping bags; a half-life in the carnation-gay songs these Latin lovers of the sun still managed to sing—half the time only.

It was in this knowledge that I took a chair on the *Promenade des Anglais*, in the hot sun, before the slowly sparkling blue sea, among many others who had come to pass an hour in that free place where no money passed. And it was here that I first saw the extraordinary middle-aged beggar. When I saw his face, a strange circular baby-face like that of a dark and grizzled cupid topped with short curls of black not golden hair—I had been dreaming again of the origin of this *Promenade des Anglais*, a strange beginning, for it was not so named out of idle compliment to England, but in remembrance of a group of English who had lived here over a hundred years ago after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in fact at another time of half-life, and who had grouped together to provide money and work for the many penniless French in the region, work that entailed the first building of a narrow road round the coast that was to become in time the wide and sweeping Promenade. So dreaming of these destitute labourers, before my eyes there drifted this modern destitute's face. I started awake, and watched him. What he then did was unbelievable—for a time.

A long white roadster drew up at the kerb. The beggar ran towards it and opened the door. A tall, well-dressed young man with an attaché case opened the other door by the steering-wheel and stepped out. He smiled at the beggar and crossed the road. The beggar waited by the car, positioning himself now at the correct door by the wheel. In a few minutes the tall young man returned. The beggar opened the door. The owner-driver stepped in and took the wheel. He turned and smiled at the beggar—but made no attempt to give him any money. Instead, he started the car. Then as the tyres began to circle the beggar in his turn smiled—not cynically but with a sort of love—and *patted the man on the shoulder!* The man nodded and the car drove off. One could almost see that pat clinging to his shoulder until the car passed out of sight.

The beggar looked round, searching for something else to do. He walked over to a group of people sitting in deck-chairs—a young man and two smartly-dressed girls. There he stood in his torn blue shirt and trousers, holding out his hand and smiling from his peculiar cupid's face. The young man looked up and fumbled in his pocket. He produced from his loose change a two-franc piece, handed this to the beggar. The beggar took it, looked at it, and for a second a sad shadow passed across his smile. Then again it brightened, and with a fine grace, a gesture of most measured politeness, he handed the coin back to the young man. At the same time he spoke—inviting the gentleman to take his lady out to supper—and turned swiftly away from the young man's reddening face and the fearful titter of his ladies.

Of course, after believing I had been mistaken or had still been dreaming, yet sharing some of the young man's shame and the beggar's censure—of course I rationalised the whole affair by judging the beggar to be less destitute than deranged. But I was wrong.

He was, in fact, shaking in my face the barometer of that half-life, demonstrating finally the weather of a wind-blown currency. For a week later in the Luxemburg Gardens in Paris he was proved no exceptional fellow, but the rule. There I was sitting one afternoon when an old man came and stood before me with his cap in hand. I, too, fumbled for coins among my change. There was luckily a five-franc piece, the wide piece that feels so big. I handed this to the old man. He took it—and then slowly, very slowly dropped it into his pocket, still standing there before my chair. And then did he give his thanks? No. Instead he said: "Ne vous dérangez-vous, monsieur, ne vous dérangez-vous pas." And continued to stand in front of me.

WILLIAM SANSOM

The Arts and Entertainment

A MASTERLY WORK

THE first London performance, last June, of Michael Tippett's "1945" Symphony probably left many listeners besides myself both puzzled and impressed. With new music of substance and originality this experience, of course, is a fairly common one : through the mists of unfamiliarity we discern vaguely the outline and the scale of the mountain, but we have as yet no idea how to set about its ascent. For its repetition, at the Morley College concert last Friday, I was lucky enough to secure the services of two of the most trustworthy of Alpine guides, one named Full Score and the other Rehearsal ; and the result exceeded my liveliest expectations. The Symphony is really a peak in contemporary English music, and the view from its summit (that is to say, its conclusion) can fairly be called majestic.

It represents no fresh departure on the composer's part, but it pushes his already known musical proclivities to an extreme point of elaboration and expressiveness ; indeed I doubt if much more remains to be said along these particular lines, and should not be surprised if the Symphony were to close one stage in his creative development. The points of departure, as before, are Tudor vocal polyphony and Hindemith ; what is new is the sense of power and the remarkable variety and richness of the whole texture. The instrumental lay-out is extremely varied and the score one of the most difficult to read (even during performance) which I can remember : melodic lines are constantly running underground, so to speak, and reappearing in the most unlikely places. Fiendishly difficult, too, to play and to conduct : the wind parts demand *virtuosi*, and the work as a whole cries out for the unlimited rehearsals, the certainty and the tonal splendour of a crack orchestra like the Boston or the Philadelphia. If I were Michael Tippett, I should pack up the score tomorrow morning and send it off to Koussevitzky, who has the means to give it in such a way that the whole musical world would have to sit up and take notice. This implies no disrespect to Walter Goehr, who believes passionately in the music and devoted all his considerable skill and intelligence to its presentation. But in the first two movements the rough-and-ready conditions of English concert life defeated him : the *allegro* never quite recovered from a bad start and the wonderfully expressive slow movement made only half the effect of which it is capable ; not until the *scherzo* did the orchestra really find its form.

Whether it was merely the playing which made the first movement sound the least convincing of the four I am not quite sure. The programme points out that it is in strict sonata form, with a "long and substantial" exposition composed of six contrasted sections, an extended development, a recapitulation of all six sections in the same order, and a "lengthened coda." All this can be verified from the score ; but the texture is so frequently, and for such long stretches, polyphonic, that it is extremely hard for the most attentive listener to grasp even the main lines of the structure. There is an inherent incongruity between polyphony and sonata form which I feel to be imperfectly resolved in this movement. Perhaps it is only that the mists have not yet rolled back from this face of the mountain ; or perhaps this is another instance of that singular trait in Mr. Tippett which causes his first movements (unlike those of almost all other symphonic composers) to appear inferior to the rest—an impression also left by the *Double Concerto* and the *Third String Quartet ;* it is as though, like some executants, he took a little time to warm up to his work ; as though his imagination positively fed upon his own activity. I have the impression, at all events, that he must evolve a more homophonic style of writing before he can fully master the problems of sonata structure.

Of the slow movement, "a variety of musical textures on a ground bass," I have already spoken ; it is a deeply felt structure whose episodes lie in reverse order on either side of a central passage for three flutes. Nothing is harder for a modern composer than to say anything new in an orchestral *scherzo ;* every possible device, whether of the quicksilver or the macabre order, seems long ago to have been done to death ; and yet Mr. Tippett has achieved a sort of frosty vivacity which sounds both captivating and fresh, and a delicious contrast in the *cantabile* trio for strings alone. But it is the Finale which seems to me, at my present stage of acquaintance with the work, both the most original and the most emotionally compelling of the four movements. It is a double fugue, in which the technical problem of devising a natural full-orchestral lay-out for three real parts is solved with complete and indeed with sensational success ; while the very end is as new and impressive as the end of the *Fifth Symphony* of Sibelius. If the British Council has any courage, it will go nap on this masterly work and ensure that it is handsomely recorded for overseas consumption. Its boldness, its strength, its expertise and its complete freedom from mush or gush are precisely the qualities which intelligent foreigners most admire and are apt to miss in much of the English music which is pushed down their reluctant throats.

No space remains to chronicle the rest of the Morley concert, and all too little for that of the Contemporary Music Society, which contained a feeble piano-and-wind *Sextet* by Poulenc and a twenty-year-old Schönbergian *Wind Quintet* by Roberto Gerhard quite unrepresentative of this interesting composer's recent work. Lennox Berkeley's 1946 *Piano Sonata*, brilliantly played by Natasha Litvin, deepened the favourable impression created by its first performance, only the slow movement seeming unworthy of the rest.

I must apologise for the chain of misfortunes, national and otherwise, which have delayed my notice of the Covent Garden *Manon*. Not that there is much to say, the production being no more than a handsome frame for a non-existent picture. The principals are frankly inadequate, Mr. Nash sounding dog-tired and Miss MacWatters supplying a top-dressing of neat coloratura which failed to redeem a middle register of the musical comedy order ; I know she is very pretty, but prettiness is not enough. To make matters worse, the lovely second act was ruined by the whirring of some electrical contraption in the roof, a nuisance which has been intermittently audible ever since last September and might surely by now have reached the ears of the management.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR

RADIO NOTES

THE Atomic Energy broadcasts have been distinguished by a serious thoroughness that does great credit to the B.B.C. The technical and descriptive talks were necessarily the more interesting, since those which dealt with the subject as a problem could, after all, do little but express pious hopes in well-chosen words. Very well-chosen words, it must be said. Eloquence, which is faith in action, can sometimes move mountains; and in their so different ways Bertrand Russell, Mr. Priestley and Sir John Anderson can hardly have failed to carry conviction to all except diabolists. Men of good will, they stated the only possible case in speeches which achieved the value of *acquits de conscience*. Mr. Priestley was, I thought, particularly wise to stress the importance of pushing forward immediately with the constructive potentialities of atomic energy. This is the best way of diverting attention from the dubious attractions of the bomb.

The Radio Eireann broadcast of Synge's masterpiece, *The Playboy of the Western World*, had a beautiful and authentic sound, marred only by a faulty transmission full of whirrings and arbitrary changes of voice level. The production was simple

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and natural enough to pass unnoticed behind the stream of eloquence. This is the kind of speech—passing easily from the vernacular to poetic imagery and back—which our theatre *must* recapture if it is not to peter out in a dwindling succession of threadbare charades. The big revival of interest in Elizabethan drama, and the success of plays like *The Eagle Has Two Heads* (the style of which derives ultimately from the Elizabethans, though it has suffered badly in the passage from French into English), are signs that British audiences are again eager for what the theatre alone can give them: the music of poetic speech. Dramatic critics, meanwhile, remain bogged in the flats left by the receding tide of Ibsen's revolution, even the best of whom misconceived the master's aims and methods. In France the rhetorical tradition has never been seriously questioned; and Synge—be it remembered—had the sense to learn the technique of his art in Paris. I hope the Third Programme is intending gradually to give us all Synge's plays; it is time we heard *Deirdre* again. And what about the later prose plays of Yeats? In any case, Radio Eireann must again be pressed into the service of our enlightenment.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

THE MOVIES

"The Best Years of Our Lives," at the Leicester Square
"While the Sun Shines," at the Plaza

The Best Years of Our Lives has the advantages and disadvantages of the "big picture." It lasts some two and three-quarter hours, and that is not the least impressive thing about it. Other films may have given us the drama of the returned fighting man: here are three such dramas interwoven. Plenty of time to zig-zag from one story to another, to ring the changes of pathos and comedy. This film has, in fact, the air—the highly successful air—of being the last and longest of its kind.

Both the best and the worst of it are seen in the unpredictable story of the handless sailor. This stab of reality goes home the instant we set eyes on him (a natural actor, Harold Russell) manipulating his steel claws to pick cigarettes out of packets and light matches. He can do almost anything with them, except escape the sense of others' horror and pity. A staring child makes him feel that he is a monster, and of course he no longer believes that his girl can really wish to marry him. The humiliation of that strong face and body is conveyed by trussed attitudes, hesitations, silences, that are the more emphatic for being unstressed. His struggle to get back to something like the simple happiness that would obviously have been his but for an atrocity of war is by far the most moving thing in a film that touches easily but not as a rule deeply. Only Hollywood, it has been said, would have had the courage to put this figure into a popular film: we ourselves would have tucked him away in a well-bred documentary on problems of rehabilitation. Well, all honour to the wide-heartedness of Mr. Goldwyn, of his script-writer Robert E. Sherwood and his director William Wyler; but I have to record also that, having taken this step in humanity, they almost destroy it by a final scene of hideously calculated sentimentality. The sailor's wedding forms the climax of the whole film, and the core of that climax is the moment when, with every eye intent, the bridegroom has to exert his skill in putting the ring on the bride's finger. Will he manage? They go on staring. The moment is lovingly prolonged . . . .

Otherwise there is some rollicking if inappropriate comedy by Fredric March and Myrna Loy; Dana Andrews gives a sharp performance as an Air Force captain who comes back to a job at the soda-fountain; Teresa Wright and Virginia Mayo appeal and dismay skilfully; and one is grateful for the glimpses into dance-halls, department stores, bar rooms, and middle-class households. In a word, *The Best Years of Our Lives* is an unusually feeling film of its kind: that kind, to us if not to Americans, has the taste of a saccharine tablet too many in one's tea.

The traditional farce of *While the Sun Shines* plays daftly and prettily round the after-war-time when every tar might still be an earl and the united nations share beds in Albany. Probably this piece, written by Terence Rattigan and directed by Antony Asquith, went more uproariously on the stage for which it was designed. Some of the joking remains West End, a *genre* to me as unappealing as Middle West; however, pace and plot and the acting of old hands keep us going. Mr. Ronald Squire, as the disarmingly indebted duke, with his speeches in the Lords and racing form, gives a beautifully judged performance; and so too, as a sensitive flower among butlers, does Mr. Miles Mallison. Here are the actors (and one might add to them, say, Mr. Cecil Trouncer for a start) for screen comedy of a solid order: we should all, I believe, like to see English films in which acting (our strong point) predominated over starry sleep-walking. Not that the youngsters and lovers of *While the Sun Shines* are bad; Mr. Bonar Colleano, filling a girl up with whisky and giving his hand-walking display, is in fact bouncingly good; and for the purposes of farce Mr. Trevor Howard and Miss Barbara White attract freshly. Often on the screen we are handed out the *hors d'œuvre* of English comedy: when shall we sit down to the hot dish?

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

THEATRE

"The White Devil," at the Duchess Theatre

The best theatrical spectacles in London are still being provided by the Great Revivals—but what productions they are! Now, before memories of Cecil Trouncer as Bosola have faded, there is a chance to see Robert Helpmann as Flaminee in the *Duchess of Malfi's* great twin, *The White Devil*.

The chief praise goes to the producer, Mr. Benthall. Although scenes and characters have been cut, he has given us a vivid impression of the play. A vision of Webster, revealing by flashes of lightning, the drama of a playwright who was himself the thunderstorm and tempest of the Jacobean stage.

Webster is produced in terms of Webster. Even the cuts intensify the obscurities of the casually strung plot. Dim figures converge from nowhere, with the grandeur and the ferocious good looks of fallen angels, to carry monstrous loads of guilt till they are themselves murdered. The sadism and sensuality, the blood and the disembowellings, which might so well be made to look ridiculous if presented with the amiable equivocation of a timid producer, seem credibly horrible when we see them presented with something of Webster's own exultation.

The beauty and mystery of the ordinary meant nothing to the dramatists of Webster's time, nor did its triviality and boredom. Indeed, even the average Jacobean dramatist is strongest just where our best are now weakest—at moments of crisis and passion. Humour and moral truths are equally perfunctory, but the *White Devil*, where the characters are doomed from the moment they enter, is one long dying speech, and the richest, therefore, in high poetry.

The great words are admirably delivered, particularly by Miss Rawlings, who with her return to the stage seems to have shed a certain English and limiting intensity, to be swept along by the volleying passions of her part. Mr. Helpmann's voice is not quite so impressive as his movement, which has the kind of absolute control one imagines to have been part of the secret of the power of Irving. Nothing could be more eloquent than his slow walk, waiting to pounce; or the horrified contemplation of his right hand, after he has struck the face of the dead duke. The rest of the cast, with the help of Mr. Paul Sheriff's magnificent costumes, fitted the scheme most aptly, particularly Mr. Hugh Griffith as the Cardinal, and the graceful and dignified Mr. Roderick Lovell as Duke Brachiano.

STEPHEN POTTER

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Correspondence

THE FUEL CRISIS

Sir,—Now that power has been restored to the factories and the immediate fuel and power crisis is over, we feel that consideration of some of the technical factors involved may help in developing plans to avoid even more severe power cuts next winter and in succeeding winters.

In this country, we depend on coal for power production. We have no native oil as an alternative fuel and there are not very many opportunities for using water power. Nevertheless, we believe it is important that some power stations, particularly those near oil refineries, should be fitted with the necessary equipment to make possible a switch-over to oil fuel during an acute crisis such as that we have just passed through. The necessary equipment is inexpensive and could be made available rapidly. More important is that we should make full use of those resources of water power that we do possess; the Severn Barrage would save nearly a million tons of coal a year and hydro-electric schemes in the Highlands could save as much more.

But even if such schemes were carried out, coal will still be the main basis for production of power. The factors involved in increasing coal output are now well known. The miners are setting an example to the nation in the way they are contributing to increased output, but even if all interests follow their example and provide the mining industry with all it needs, an increase in output of 5 per cent or thereabouts is all that we can hope to achieve in 1947. A much greater contribution can be made towards balancing power production against power needs by *greater efficiency of coal utilisation*. On an average in this country, we use only 20 per cent of the energy available in the coal we burn, the other 80 per cent. is wasted. While it is not practicable to achieve a 100 per cent efficiency of utilisation we believe that an efficiency of 40 per cent could be reached; this has been done in Germany. Both industrial and domestic consumers can help.

The main technical steps involved are:—

(i) Increasing the average of steam-raising efficiency in industry to the level of the best firms. This would mean providing old-fashioned hand-stoked boilers with the much more efficient automatic stoking equipment, small firms being provided with credits where necessary. Farmers can now be dispossessed for bad husbandry; we believe a salutary effect could be achieved by penalising failure to reach certain minimum standards of fuel utilisation in industry.

(ii) The domestic open coal fire must be replaced by stoves burning processed coal (coke, coalite or gas) whatever sentimental sacrifices are involved. All housing estates should be fitted with such stoves, or better still, district heating schemes should be developed using waste heat from power stations.

Technical improvements such as these cannot be carried out without detailed planning and allocation of priorities by the Government; this is what is now needed.

F. B. Cope, Hon. Secretary,
London Area Committee.
The Association of Scientific Workers.

FILTH, MALICE AND IGNORANCE

Sir,—The indignation so crudely expressed by Sir Herbert G. Williams in your last issue has no facts to justify it.

As a colliery manager with wide experience I can point out one instance after another of collieries being closed between the wars when there were none of the reasons present which he names. They were closed partly because of suicidal competition and partly as steps towards creating a scarcity, as was done in many other industries to our present national disadvantage.

Many of these pits were reopened when coal became scarcer by the same companies who closed them. This is sufficient evidence by itself to refute Sir Herbert's assertions. In many cases pits were bought by rival concerns and were closed down immediately and opened again later.

The trail of broken homes and spirits and hatred of the industry by the younger generation still remains behind with all the accumulated trouble for which we are now suffering so seriously.

18 The Crescent, C. L. Watson
Taunton.

SEMI-FASCIST SOUTH AFRICA?

Sir,—Mr. Sole says in so many words that Smuts is not altering his policy, either on treatment of the Indians or on South-West Africa. Instead he is hoping "that the United Nations would achieve a better understanding of South Africa's problems." What is this but "defiance" put politely, as we would expect from such an able diplomat?

Only in the case of South-West Africa has the United Nations directly requested that a mandated territory should be placed under trusteeship. Only in this case has there been a direct refusal by the administering Power, which proposes to continue administering the territory as an integral part of the Union of South Africa. Mr. Sole says this is desired by the non-European population concerned, but the scanty evidence available suggests that the "consultation" that took place was very unsatisfactory. Otherwise, why was the representative of the Institute of Race Relations (and other independent observers) refused admission to the territory at the time, and why has the Union Government refused a public inquiry into the threats, promises and other forms of pressure that are alleged to have been used by its officials to ensure the result they desired?

Mr. Sole is right in saying that half-truths are published in this country concerning South Africa—most of them from his side. In answer to an inquiry of mine on the casualties caused by police action in the African miners' strike last August he gave the "official figures" as 5 killed and 594 injured ("nearly all minor injuries"). Yet when the same inquiry was made in South Africa, Mr. Brink, Director of Native Labour for the Witwatersrand, gave the figures as 9 killed and 1,248 injured. A recent letter from Johannesburg suggests that the actual casualties were considerably greater than either version: "A real iron curtain has descended over the mine compounds here. It has been extremely difficult to get any exact information. Organisers of the African Mine Workers' Union have repeatedly been arrested, driven from compounds, and seriously assaulted by police. Seriously injured workers have actually been sent home to the countryside, so that they should not die in the mine hospitals. Every hospital on the Reef mines was crammed to overflowing for many months after the strike." As far as I am aware there has still been no public inquiry into this shocking example of police violence.

Perhaps the biggest "half-truth" for which "liberal" South Africans like Mr. Sole are responsible (without it they would be quite unable to defend the actions of their Government) is the line that condemnation of Smuts by the United Nations and by public opinion in Britain will only harden reactionary feeling among white South Africans and thus lead to worse treatment for the non-Europeans. Even if this were true, it would be a poor argument for an attitude of "appeasement"; but it is false, for South Africa isn't Germany, and Malan will never be another Hitler. I call in evidence the *Rand Daily Mail* (organ of the mining interests and scarcely to be termed progressive) which recently stated in an editorial:

"It has become very clear that the world as a whole heartily disapproves of our native policy . . . Now we in the Union have to choose between two courses. We can either continue the present policy in the face of world opinion, or modify that policy and so admit that there may be an element of truth in some of the criticisms levelled against us. We may reflect that it is unwise for a small country to be completely out of step with everyone else, and may even begin to entertain some doubts about ideas which we have

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hitherto accepted as axiomatic. This might be the more prudent course. In either case, the time has come for the Union to do a little heart-searching about its native policy."

I feel that the process of heart-searching will only be assisted by such expressions of opinion as the Petition against Racial Injustice and Discrimination in South Africa, launched by the Student Labour Federation, which has already received over 5,000 signatures from students in Britain. C. MEREDITH

Student Labour Federation,
21 Bedford Chambers, W.C.2.

TRADE WITH INDONESIA

SIR,—As a Socialist I welcome your note on Indonesia last week. The Imperialistic attitude of the Netherlands Government and the methods it is using in suppressing a nation to whom it has promised independence should be abhorrent to every thinking Socialist. But as a materialist I suggest that the British Government enters into a trade agreement with the Republic of Indonesia, which is willing to trade large quantities of rice, tea, sugar, rubber, tobacco, sisal, palm oil, spices, coffee, quinine, kapok, etc., for British manufactured goods, provided that we send the shipping and insist that the Dutch lift their blockade from the free Indonesian ports. The Indonesians have appointed a Trade Commissioner in Sydney for this purpose, and Australian Socialists, aware of a great independent movement only four flying hours away from Port Darwin, have pledged themselves to help. In joining with them we help to make a socially conscious people free, and at the same time acquire a ready source of supply for essential foodstuffs, medicines and raw materials.

SIDNEY MIKARDO

CYPRUS

SIR,—Reports were published in the press of a mass meeting of several thousand people held in Nicosia, Cyprus, on February 17th, asking for the union of the island with Greece. I doubt, however, if the public of this country is aware either of the force of feeling which the question arouses among the Cypriot people or of the solid grounds on which it is based.

The desire for a free national life in unity with the rest of the Hellenic world is deep-rooted. During the centuries of Turkish domination over the whole of the Greek lands, the dream of a resuscitated Hellas passed from generation to generation of Greeks. When, by the 1821 revolution, a part of Greece was liberated, the unredeemed territories, among which was Cyprus, aspired to be freed and united with the mother country. This aspiration found its happy realisation during the Balkan wars of 1912 and the first Great War in the case of all the Greek islands except Cyprus and the Dodecanese, because these were then held by Italy and Great Britain respectively.

The British occupation of 1878 was received with enthusiasm by the Cypriots as a sure step towards national liberty by union with Greece, and it was in this spirit that the then Archbishop Sophronios welcomed the first High Commissioner of the island, Sir Garnett Wolseley. Since that time the people of Cyprus have lost no opportunity of putting forward most emphatically to successive British Governments their claim for union with Greece.

We are now at the end of a World War which has been fought for freedom and self-determination. The people of Cyprus were among the first peoples of the Colonial Empire to rally to the call and fight under the banner of liberty. They now claim that the blessings of that liberty should not be denied them, and that the right to decide their own future should be recognised and applied to Cyprus.

ZENO ROSSIDES,
General Secretary,
National Delegation of Cyprus.

MERCHANT NAVY CONDITIONS

SIR,—The Merchant Navy has had much publicity in recent years, but the adverse criticism of Mr. Kerr in his letter published in your last issue is altogether too severe. Possibly he is one of those who prophesied a wholesale drift from the sea when the Essential Work Order was rescinded in December last and imagined that the officers and men were only waiting for the opportunity to leave the humiliating conditions of life and employment that shipowners and unions had done nothing to improve.

The facts are that since 1940 every seaman has been guaranteed continuous pay on a generous scale whether or not on Articles. Owners and Unions through the National Maritime Board have agreed amicably on every reasonable demand regarding improved conditions of employment and manning. The Merchant Navy before the war was fed and still is fed on a scale far more generous and varied than any shore employment. The minimum period of holidays with pay per annum is 24 days for ratings and 30 days for officers but in practice is very much more owing to the complicated system of leave in lieu of overtime; in thousands of cases amounts paid for overtime on cessation of Articles are so great that Masters and officers are only too willing to admit in private that there is a danger of junior officers being prevented from improving their status owing to the too generous remuneration for duties involved; whereas the taxpayer guaranteed the Merchant Navy Pool with this continuous employment pay the owners themselves take over the liability on April 1st; if the basic rate of pay for ratings is agreed at £18 per month, which is doubtful, the amount of remuneration will in no way be affected as compared with present rates; many shore engineers are leaving their employment to take up a sea-going career; the youth of this country are learning with disappointment that it is almost a privilege to be accepted in the Merchant Navy owing to the acute competition to obtain a berth.

It is surely difficult to find any job which can offer better terms of employment than 2 years' contract at £300 per year guaranteed after 3 years' sea service for a seaman or fireman.

There are no signs of any real dissatisfaction amongst the sea-going community with the present conditions excepting the complaint by Masters and senior officers that discipline is hard to maintain. This will, however, certainly adjust itself as the service settles down after a few years. The Merchant Navy offers great opportunities for any man with ambition and has nothing to fear in comparison with other jobs.

Mansion House Chambers, E. C. HASLAM
Close, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

HISTORY AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SIR,—Mr. R. H. S. Crossman's interesting review of the abridgement of Toynbee's great history describes the learned author accurately as a secular Thomist, whose panacea for our chaotic world is a submissive return to the rule of the Vatican. We are asked to close our eyes to the fact that the bulk of the population in the two Axis countries that fastened this ghastly tragedy on Europe are subjects of the Vatican, and that the totalitarian racket began, with full clerical approval, in Abyssinia and Spain.

On deeper grounds it is surely curious that our most erudite historian should invite us to believe in an unhistorical myth. Doellinger, who was excommunicated for refusing to falsify history, wrote as follows: "It was on the basis of fabrications invented by a monk of his own order, including a canon of Chalcedon giving all bishops an unlimited right of appeal to the Pope and on the forgeries found in Gratian that St. Thomas built up his Papal system. The spurious Cyril of Alexandria is his favourite author on this subject and he constantly quotes him."

Perhaps the French cynic was right when he said:—*Surtout méfiez-vous des sources.* HAROLD BINNS

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Writers, like most other people, travel mainly in the hope of renewing themselves. The English Channel, for instance, is well known to have in its deeps a briny magic, a power to transform even the inmost metal of an outgoing traveller. In middle life an author may perhaps count upon a further intoxicant—that of an assured reputation in some foreign country. In such a case all his visits will be honeymoons. He will have aimed, after all, to present in his work the perfected image of his best self; at home, the absurd baggage of circumstance too often prevents us from setting a contemporary upon this absolute plane, and a hundred years may have to pass before he can stand in something approaching an ideal relation to his public; but a foreign audience will ask nothing so much as to cherish him, if not in the likeness of eternity, at any rate in something most agreeably similar. Skirting such current examples as may leap to mind, it will be convenient to take Turgeniev as our noblest instance. When, in October, 1883, Renan pronounced his melodious farewell over the bier of the great novelist, he spoke for the whole of France. In French eyes, Russia and Turgeniev were one. Renan had none of the doubts and reservations which were to afflict so exquisite a judge as Maurice Baring; for him Turgeniev was the appointed voice of "that great Slav people whose appearance among the first races of the world has been the most surprising phenomenon of the century." It was not phrase-making to say that Turgeniev seemed "to have lived for thousands of years before the day of his birth," and that "no other man had been, to such a degree the incarnation of a whole people." Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, after all, were obscurities at this time, and Pushkin and Gogol the concern of specialists. For Daudet, Zola and the Goncourts, Russia was simply the home of the colossus whom they had encountered—and with what great pleasure—usually on a sofa, with his enormous frame looped like a python among assuaging cushions.

Turgeniev for his part was a convinced francophile. So gladly did he respond to the canons of French talk that even when he lay, without anæsthetic, on the operating table, he set himself to turn the incident to some conversational advantage. "I wondered," he said to Daudet, "how best to convey to you all exactly how the knife slits open the outer skin and then gets down to the flesh below—rather as if one were slicing a banana." This trait must have appealed particularly to Flaubert, who of all Frenchmen was most devoted to Turgeniev. Those curious to know more of this friendship will find a great deal of new matter in *Lettres Inédites de Flaubert à Tourguéneff* (edited by Gerard Gailly, Edition du Rocher, Monaco, 220 frs.). Nearly a hundred and thirty new letters are given in this book, which, if read in conjunction with Halpérine-Kaminski's *Turgeniev and his French Friends*, reveals to us a large part of the dialogue which sustained the two friends during the years in which they wrote, among other things, *L'Education Sentimentale, Bouvard et Pécuchet, Virgin Soil*, and *Smoke*.

Flaubert first met Turgeniev in February, 1863. The two great inflammables were quick to kindle, and in Flaubert's first encomium there is more than civility, and more than casual appreciation. Turgeniev, for him, had all the gifts—tenderness, irony, observation—and the power to combine them; the Russian landscape was so beautifully evoked to become the thoughtful accomplice of the narrative, and Turgeniev knew, as no one else, how to disengage from ordinary life the poetry of indecision. In *First Love* Flaubert retrieved the sensations of his own youth; and of Russia itself he had the strongest local impression—as strong as when, "reading *Don Quixote*, I long to go on horseback along a road white with dust, and later to eat olives and raw onions in the shade of a rock." Turgeniev had, above all, the supreme quality of devotion to art. Distinction, without loss of power—this was also Flaubert's ideal, and one which, as he later lamented, had gone quite out of fashion. "My friends, Sainte-Beuve and Taine," he wrote, "do not pay enough attention to *art*, to the fact that books exist in their own right, to composition, to style—in short, to the elements of Beauty. In La Harpe's time critics were grammarians; now they are historians—that's the only difference." Turgeniev became his confidant, "the only man in the world with whom I care to talk," and the witness of his efforts to raise French prose to unimagined levels of beauty and authority. He retained to the last the quality of an apparition. For some years it seemed that, like Encke's comet, he would reappear at ever shorter intervals; but Flaubert soon found that Turgeniev's visits were governed by a failing to which no celestial analogy can be found. In brief, he chucked. In the end he went so far, though with an infinity of polite evasion, as to chuck Flaubert four times in eight days. Sometimes he did it at long range, in order to go to Pitlochry and shoot grouse, or to attend the Scott centenary celebrations at Edinburgh; sometimes he wished only to remain in Paris and to conserve that purposeful mobility which was, for him, the first requirement of polite life. Behind many of these excuses, moreover, we sense the switch of Madame Viardot's skirts. It is our good fortune that this pliability drew from Flaubert not only the letters in which he likened Turgeniev to a man of rags and straw, or to a rotting pear, but also others in which he exposed hurts and urgencies which would otherwise have been relieved in talk.

The last twelve years of Flaubert's life were marked by the gradual withdrawal of everything which might have consoled him for the failure of his best work. He had lost the company of Bouilhet, Gautier, George Sand, Jules de Goncourt, Sainte-Beuve. The defeat of 1871 marked the end of a regime in which he had at least been secure; and within his own family his nephew's needs quietly bled him of every penny he possessed. To all this, Turgeniev was the counterpoise. Flaubert could say to him, in June, 1871:

> You must think it foolish of me to nourish such a hatred of Prussia. That is exactly what I so much resent—that the Germans have made me feel like some savage of the 12th century. But what else can one do? In no other epoch would educated men behave like wild beasts. . . . In Paris the mental state of the people is even more lamentable than any physical destruction. One picks one's way between cretinism and raving madness.

And fifteen months later:

> Apart from my personal motives for grief (the death, these last three years, of nearly all of those for whom I cared) I am prostrated, really prostrated by the state of the country. . . . The Bourgeoisie is so bemused that it no longer has the instinct to defend itself; and what comes after will be worse. I am heavy with the sadness which afflicted the patricians of Rome in the 4th century. I sense that an irremediable Barbary in rising from the depths of the earth, and I hope only that I shall be dead before it carries everything before it. Even now it's no laughing matter . . . never has it been so plain that these people hate what is noble, disdain what is beautiful, and hold all literature in execration. I have always tried to live in an ivory tower; but now a great tide of filth is lapping against its walls, and before long it will be overwhelmed.

Thenceforward there would be no shelter for the artist, no silver-mines of Laurium from which he could draw the price of silence and privacy. Irony was his best weapon against a world in which the present was a constant irritation, and the future a thing of foreseeable dread. When Marshal Bazaine escaped in 1874 from his prison on the Ile Sainte-Marguérite, Flaubert gave one of his rare shouts of amusement; and later, when a great personage (director, among other things, of the *Revue Catholique*) was detected in an act of immodesty in the Champs-Elysées, Flaubert perceived that, there also, was matter for a topical farce: "N'éprouvez-vous pas," he wrote, "toutes les délices de la vengeance quand il survient de pareilles histoires à un môssieur officiel? Les rayons de la gloire céleste se mêlant aux plis de l'anus, la toge du tribunal pardessus les latrines." The theatre, however, was never Flaubert's ploy; like many imaginative writers he detested the shifts and adjustments to which playwrights are driven.

At such times Flaubert amused himself with the idea of visiting Turgeniev at Spasskoie. Himself "the poor wreckage of a vanished world," he found this vision as distracting as Herod's court or Roman Carthage. The endless white silences of a Russian winter contrasted, in Turgeniev's account, with the scorched *allées* of a summer garden, set amid an encircling infinity of rye. "What would I not give," Flaubert wrote, "to lie at ease in your hay!" And as for the verandah, the apron-stage of Russian country life—Flaubert was glad to think that his letters, at any rate, would travel as far. In the event he made only such outings as his new book required—the book in which he hoped to exorcise the bourgeois once and for all. He did go, for his health, as far as Switzerland; but he disliked the Alps ("they are too big to be of any use to me"), there were too many English in his hotel, and he was no longer of an age to enlist noble scenery as the auxiliar of romance. Besides, rest only made him ill. Thenceforth he never rested; and if Bouvard and Pécuchet plunged him in too hideous a bath of stupidity, he found relief in the composition of *Trois Contes*. A great local patriot, he never minded being at Croisset; his old red divan, a roast duck stuffed *à la Rouennaise*, and some pages of Corneille were three unfailing stimulants of local origin. Turgeniev sent him salmon and caviar; later a fastuous Russian dressing-gown coaxed Flaubert into oriental fantasies; "je voudrais être tout nu dedans," he declared, "et y abriter des Circassiennes." Plutarch and Saint-Simon he could read for pleasure; and, apart from the hundreds of miscellaneous volumes which had to be read and marked for *Bouvard*, there came occasional welcome gifts. An amusing book called *Vathek*, for example, which Mallarmé had discovered; and near the end of his life, Turgeniev sent him *War and Peace*. It was a great excitement for Flaubert, and the first two volumes seemed to him tremendously good; but the third fell badly away. "In it one becomes aware of Tolstoy as a man, an author and a Russian; previously one had seen only Nature and Humanity personified." Turgeniev agreed that Tolstoy's great fault, as a novelist, was "his philosophy, which is at once that of a mystic and that of a bumptious child."

Nobody in Flaubert's circle was ever very well. Anæmia and perpetual headaches were the least of their ills, and even the young Maupassant was branded by Flaubert as "archi-goutteux, ultra-rhumatisant et totalement névropathe." (Maupassant's enervation was such that even "ces dames" could not distract him; but Flaubert thought that perhaps this was as well, since the zeal of visitors to the Exposition of 1878 had put a great number of these meritorious persons completely out of action.) Towards 1880 Flaubert's own illnesses become ever more vexatious, but his greatest pleasure was always to see Turgeniev, and to correspond with him. Turgeniev for his part had tried hard to secure Flaubert a lucrative sinecure, the care of the Mazarine Library, but although he went so far as to plead with Gambetta himself, he had no success. Four years later, with Flaubert already long in the grave, Turgeniev experienced that mortal collapse of health which was, *vis-à-vis* his French friends, his final, if involuntary, gesture of affiliation. His doctor was surprised to find that he believed himself to be withholding a siege by a large force of Assyrian soldiers. "That's from the ramparts of Nineveh!" he would cry, as he made as if to throw a stone at his visitor's legs. Readers of M. Gailly's book will find in it more tender and more attaching images of the great man whose passage gave to Ventnor, and to Six Mile Bottom, and even to 30, Devonshire Place, their first whiff of poetry.

John Russell

THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

Richard Hakluyt and his Successors. Edited by EDWARD LYNAM. *The Hakluyt Society.* 18s. 6d.

There are many prescriptions for old age, all of them tedious and none of them, from the individual point of view, very successful; but for societies of various kinds, whose longevity and mortality rate alike escape the notice of the Registrar-General, there appears to be no treatment so beneficial as the celebration of a centenary. When the time comes for that event there is not only the opportunity to survey the past, but to rejoice over a renewed lease of life, and an institution such as the Hakluyt Society, which has just reached the hundred-year mark, can well differ from Macbeth and look to have

> That which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.

The first three of the five chapters in the centenary volume issued by the Hakluyt Society form a kind of prelude to a sketch of the Society's own history and a consideration of its future, and it is a prelude in which knowledge and literary skill are gracefully shown. It is possible there are students of English history who think of Richard Hakluyt as little more than an able and industrious compiler of records of voyages, but how much more he was than that is shown by Dr. J. A. Williamson in the first chapter. Hakluyt, by a happy fate as a boy, became interested in "the sweet study of the history of cosmography," and in due course became a historian "for the honour and benefit of this commonwealth wherein I live and breathe." No writer could have been better fitted to the Elizabethan period. "The public interest with which he was concerned," writes Dr. Williamson, "was first the revival and then the advancement of national greatness by means of trade." There were powerful forces to drive him to that line of thought. Fear of war with Spain, the loss of foreign trade, unemployment, poverty and crowded jails at home—all combined to make him "the most forceful advocate of the colonial school of thought, which looked for social betterment not only through the expansion of trade, but by the founding of new homes for the hungry and desolate in the vacant lands across the sea." He and his friends dreamed wonderful dreams of colonies flowing with milk and honey, and there were sound ideas behind those dreams. After the failure of Gilbert's attempt to plant a colony in Newfoundland, leadership in colonial enterprise fell to Raleigh, who, with Hakluyt to help him, was "bent on a national effort on the grand scale, with State finance and the prestige of the Crown involved." They failed to convert the Queen to their views, which is hardly remarkable, for the scheme was beyond the power of England at the time even if the war with Spain had not come to put an end to it. Three generations had to pass before the American colonies could be built up to the strength Hakluyt had thought possible within his own time. The finding of the North-West passage to Asia, however, which he had in view, remained as a glittering lure; and none can deny the sanity of his view that the great need of an oceanic power was an adequate supply of trained seamen.

As a parson Hakluyt was a pluralist of the old-fashioned sort, and one of the posts he held for some years was that of chaplain of the English embassy in Paris, where he must have learned much of the colonial ambitions of the French and other European Powers which were later to compete with English enterprise, especially in the East. In the nineties of the 16th century the East India project took the place occupied by the Virginian in the eighties, and when negotiations for a charter to the East India Company were being carried on, Hakluyt was frequently asked for advice; the connection was maintained and he became the permanent consultant of the Company. "His *Voyages* became an item of the ships' stores, copies being supplied to all the expeditions. On one occasion their information was reckoned to have saved the Company several thousand pounds." The publications of the Hakluyt Society are similarly known to have been of great service to modern explorers.

Hakluyt had a long line of successors, greatly varying in aim and accomplishment. First of them was Samuel Purchas, whom Sir William Foster describes in this book as "fussy and egotistic, with a craving for notoriety," but who preserved much valuable material. After him came a number of compilers and writers of voyages and travels, though from the time that *Purchas His Pilgrimes* was published, in 1625, to the close of the seventeenth century, no major collection of voyages appeared in England. This period is dealt with by Mr. G. R. Crone and Mr. R. A. Skelton in a long and erudite chapter, described by the President, Dr. Lynam, as opening up a new subject in English historical literature. The incorporation of the Royal Society by charter in 1602 gave an impetus to the public interest in geography which grew until in the following century the vogue of travel literature was outrun by theology.

Sir William Foster, for many years secretary and then president of the Hakluyt Society, has written a retrospect of its history. He calls that admirable chapter a rambling chronicle, but it is just what such a chronicle should be—a blend of history, ascertainable from the records of the Society, with recollections of the many men who have directed its policy. He traces the origin of the Society to W. D. Cooley, a noted geographer in his day, who became its first secretary under Sir Roderick Murchison, F.R.S., who was president for nearly twenty-five years. Among many other distinguished men who served the Society were Colonel Yule, who edited *Cathay and the Way Thither* and is even better known for the work on the travels of Marco Polo; and Sir Clements Markham. Of the latter, secretary for twenty-eight years, president for twenty, and the editor of twenty-nine volumes for the Society, Sir William writes that, although his output was hasty and he solved difficulties in translation by Gordian methods, "on the whole we may say that, not only in his length of service, but in his massive literary contribution, he was by far the most outstanding figure in the history of the Society." It is natural that Sir William Foster should say little of his own services to the Society. One wonders what modern writers on the history of British relations with the East would do without his long labours on the India Office records and his editions of voyages for the Society. His work is a conspicuous part of the 200 volumes which the Hakluyt Society has issued, volumes which cover most of the globe and many periods.

SAMUEL T. SHEPPARD

WOMAN, WHAT A SEX YOU ARE!

Women: An Analytical Study. By RICHARD CURLE. *Watts.* 10s. 6d.

I emerged from Mr. Curle's modest work with a sincere regard for the author, and an indescribable sensation of empty-handedness. No words but his own can half suggest this elusive quality. For instance:

> The most disconcerting thing about human beings is that they all differ from one another—differ to such an extent that their entities are never really decipherable—and yet it is the one thing we are likely to forget when writing about them as men or women. Or perhaps it is the one thing we have to forget; if we remembered it how would we dare to generalize? Yet, just as the laws of chance are only seen functioning to perfection over a great number of throws, though they must have begun to function from the beginning, so generalizations about people in the mass cannot be accurate unless, in some degree, they are applicable to the individual.
>
> Naturally, I do not mean that the really fair generalizations one might make about women as a class—for there are innumerable traits which apply merely or mainly to special types—are equally evident in every woman; I mean only that in the same way as there are certain universal male characteristics, so there are certain universal female characteristics. . . .
>
> I am not so foolish as to pretend that it is possible to put a finger on the actual spot. It is far too imponderable and comprehensive for that, far too interwoven with sex, and yet it is perfectly obvious. In one sense personality rises above sex, in another it is a part of sex; and, to be candid, I am not quite sure which are the generalizations beyond dispute. Perhaps no separate one is, perhaps words are inadequate, and yet there it stands, staring one in the face, plain as a pikestaff.

It will be seen that Mr. Curle does not err in the direction of sweeping statement. This is from the twenty-seventh chapter; there are thirty-two in all, and almost all are equally difficult to get one's teeth into.

A certain animus would appear to be revealed in the chapter-headings: Feminine Ruthlessness—Unfairness as an Art—An Anatomy of Nagging—Why Women Tell Lies. But the author is a kind man; his resentments are superficial, and even his remark that woman, "like the fly, sees a different world," may not have been meant disagreeably. Not that woman, when unwrapped from his saving clauses, has much to boast of. She is often brave, staunch in adversity, and capable of "doglike devotion"; but she is hard, scheming, humourless, dishonourable, inconsiderate and small-minded. Her very cleverness and "studied schemes" are largely a waste of effort. ("For years and years a parrot lives in its cage, sleeplessly vigilant, ready for any emergency, with a suspicious glitter in its beady eyes, but at the end of all those years it is still in the cage and has achieved nothing whatsoever.") And while this mental inferiority of women is no reproach—men do not ask them to shine—their moral obliquity can be very trying. Yet no man of heart will sit in judgment on them, or fail to pity them profoundly. "The whole problem of women's moods and of what goes on inside their racked brains is very obscure." Their "underlying hysteria is always working towards the surface." To understand why they lie so glibly "one must understand those panics which are, in truth, part of their normal life. . . . The immemorial is knocking on their brain." "It is in the blood of women to feel that existence is a burden." They do, indeed, seem to be a mistake of nature. "Not quite real" in the company of their own sex, yet "eternally estranged" from the other—well may they incline to throw up the sponge; well may they "visualise, as a last resort, a universe from which the complications of sex have been eliminated." But it is only a dream; "men are essential to their well-being," and though some appear to get on without, "the spinster whose brisk demeanour and blithe smile spread an air of happiness around her must often be covertly unhappy."

It is Mr. Curle's great charm never to evade the obvious in thought or speech; and I should call his book (as far as one can make it out) a sensible variant of the old-fashioned view. He is really soundest when annoyed—by an assumption of sexual privilege, by the intuition humbug, the female Atlas, the "would-be tactful woman in her stride." With more surprise one may hear that "women are seldom at a loss—the most embarrassing situation finds them unruffled": that they have a native talent for the stage (this illusion should be dispelled by a visit to any theatre): that they are often "almost impeccable" as art critics. And one may be provoked to hear yet again that they regard men as children, and that the proper function of their intellect is to guide these children "with invisible reins." But this view, surely designed to keep the weaker sex out of mischief, has been adopted by so many of them with such complacency that it is vain to protest, or to suggest that the women who really "guide" their husbands do it with a bludgeon, and not by virtue of their "talent for intrigue." Yet I dare say Mr. Curle would agree

in part; there is almost nothing with which he does not agree in part. And considering how much women exasperate him, and how paltry he thinks they are, I do feel that he writes of them very nicely. K. JOHN

A WORD FOR ITALY

Italy Speaks. By B. BARCLAY CARTER. *Gollancz.* 6s.

During the war the Foreign Office attitude to the various Resistance Movements might be defined as encouragement with reservations. Unofficial allies were welcome, of course, but it was regrettable that they were not quite the right people. It was a pity that, owing to the issues of the war (at least as perceived by the vulgar), the rich and the Right tended to be collaborationist while the poor and the Left tended to be resistant.

And there was a limit to what you could do about it. You could pretend that Mihailovitch represented the heart of Yugoslav resistance long after you knew he didn't; you could get hold of old Zervas in Greece and set him up with arms that might have gone to E.L.A.S.; you could soft-pedal the heroic achievements of anti-Fascists in Italy; you could hedge and procrastinate about the publication of peace aims. All this might help to blur and, in the event, perhaps even to falsify the vulgar notion of the war as an international civil war, than which nothing could be more dangerous, but you took the risk of being convicted of unnecessarily postponing victory. Well, it couldn't be helped. Everyone must take some risks in war-time.

Now the main argument of the vulgar and the innocent was that a purely nationalist war is bound to be followed by a purely nationalist peace, which in time produces another nationalist war. An international civil war on the other hand would have been followed by a peace conference from which no country, but all Fascists, would have been absent.

However, the Foreign Office won and the vulgar, which included the Labour Party, lost. Nor has the course then set been noticeably changed by the General Election.

This is the explanation of the current tragedy of Italy. Miss Barclay Carter has written a book about it which doesn't claim to be objective. She is too indignant for that. And I cannot blame her.

Most of it is a picture or rather a mosaic of Italian anti-Fascist activities not merely since the armistice with Italy or since 1939, but throughout the pre-war years when Fascism was receiving so much encouragement from abroad.

The tenacity and sacrifices and volume of these activities (there were never less than 35,000 political prisoners in the Fascist gaols in addition to the numberless exiles—100,000 in France alone) should have foreshadowed how half-heartedly Mussolini's war would be fought and explained the bewildering enthusiasm with which Italians changed sides. The full story of it has been so sparsely and pusillanimously reported to us that we do not understand how stunned is Italy by the ill-requital of the draft Treaty or how imperilled her spirit and her convalescent democracy.

This perhaps is the gravest aspect of the whole matter. Economically the Treaty imposes burdens that Italy can only bear by hocking herself, body and soul, to the United States and Great Britain. (Was that the intention?) Territorially and by reason of an imposed unilateral disarmament, she is left defenceless on both her Eastern and Western flanks. (Having exposed her, do we assume the possibly awkward responsibility for protecting her against pressures or depredation? Or is she to rely on the general apparatus of international security under Uno, which is so far little more than a hope?)

But psychologically the substance and the manner of the Treaty are perhaps even more crippling. Discounting the Italian civil war, it not only proceeds on the fallacy that modern nations are homogeneous, but imputes a homogeneity to Mussolini's Italy which it denies to the Italy of today's risorgimento. What better calculated to hamstring her recovery and alienate her good will than to treat her not as an Ally who had lost 100,000 men in our common cause, nor even as a co-belligerent (that canny, grudging formula) but as an ex-enemy who had never earned certificates from Eisenhower, Alexander or others that she had well and truly "worked her passage"? We have not done very well by our friends.

If Miss Barclay Carter's book is as widely read as I hope, it may help to crystallise pressure towards such modifications of the Treaty as are still possible and a lenient interpretation of it. Apart from the Treaty there are many psychological emollients open to us in Britain. Why for instance need we withhold the exchange of Ambassadors? Why shouldn't British decorations for gallantry be granted to Italians who were recommended for them? America has done both long ago. BENN W. LEVY

HEALING PLANTS

Compassionate Herbs. By MRS. C. F. LEYEL. *Faber and Faber.* 12s. 6d.

Mrs. Leyel's latest book on herbs is so bewilderingly squeezed with information that I scarcely know where to begin. Is it best to discuss her claim for the healing and medicinal properties of the herb, or to pick at random here and there, making a magpie selection from the heaped treasure of her lore? Mrs. Leyel, notoriously a herbal enthusiast, would doubtless prefer a reviewer qualified to argue her case and even to comment on the Medicines and Surgical Appliances Bill, rejected in 1936, and the Pharmacy and Medicines Act, passed in 1941 (to neither of which measures, by the way, does she refer in her present volume) rather than a sciolist in such matters, whose interest is more readily aroused by the queer, the antiquarian, or the botanical oddments so freely sprinkled over her pages. Delectable morsels, for the curious reader.

There may well be much in Mrs. Leyel's claims. We all know that foxgloves produce digitalis; so if one plant can be so demonstrably useful, why not another? Mrs. Leyel might also argue that modern science does, on occasion, discover some unsuspected basis in old wives' tales; I am assured, for instance, though not by Mrs. Leyel, that the rough-and-ready use of cobwebs to stop bleeding has now been justified by the presence in the cobweb of some mould remotely allied to penicillin. It is undeniable, also, judging by Mrs. Leyel's many examples, that a long ancestry in pharmaceutical and surgical practice attends the most unexpected plants of our gardens: the common Daisy, significantly named *Bellis perennis*, had its use among the Romans for wounds received in war; the seeds of the Delphinium were regarded as a cure for the stings of scorpions; Dioscorides, who sounds like a plant but was, in fact, physician to Antony and Cleopatra, esteemed the Pyrethrum as a febrifuge. Mrs. Leyel's application of the term *herb* seems to be very elastic; most of us think of sage, tarragon, thyme, not of delphiniums or daisies, in that connection; but perhaps Mrs. Leyel intends to include all forms of vegetable growth, and in any case it detracts nothing from the fascination of her subject. It is a fascination to which every reader will contribute his own little scrap of linking interest; thus, when I read in Mrs. Leyel's pages that the Carrot was regarded by the Greeks as an aphrodisiac and has been given the popular English name of Rantipole, I am instantly reminded of an, I think, un-

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published remark made by Queen Victoria to Lady Palmerston, "But then, my dear, you were brought up in such a rantipole fashion." Did Queen Victoria fully know what she was saying? Unadvised by Mrs. Leyel, or by Mr. Eric Partridge's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, Her Majesty probably didn't.

It is in this spirit that the lay reader should approach this book. Not for him, the dispute between the herbalist and the doctor. A simpler and less controversial pleasure awaits him. Does he know that bluebells were once used as a substitute for starch? Has he remembered that Tennyson, who was habitually and even tiresomely accurate in his nature-notes, recommended us to "squeeze the bluebell 'gainst the adder's bite"? Was he even aware that Charles-Quint employed the Bugle to relieve his gout? Has he realised that Sphagnum Moss, so extensively used in dressings in the First and Second World Wars, was also used for the same purpose at Flodden Field by the Highlanders in 1513; or that long before the First and Second World Wars, and even before that tiny little Norman Conquest of England in 1066, its value was known among the Esquimaux and the natives of Kashmir?

It is improbable that he knew any of these things. He may learn them now, and many other things besides, if only he will resort to Mrs. Leyel, who knows far, far more about them than either he or I can ever hope to know. He may not thereafter feel impelled to trust his more serious diseases to the herbal remedy in preference to the specialists of Harley Street, but at least he will have picked a great bunch of information to hang up in his literary store-cupboard; as his cook, if she is a good cook, or his wife, if she is a good housewife, should last autumn have hung up bunches to dry in her kitchen.

A final word of admiration for Mrs. Leyel's immense herbalistic erudition should be given to her indices: General, Botanical, Familiar, French, German, Italian, Sanscrit, Indian, Malayan, Arabian and Turkish. V. SACKVILLE-WEST

SOMEHOW GREAT

Jan Smuts. By F. S. CRAFFORD. *Allen and Unwin.* 21*s.*

Nothing is more difficult to write than a good biography of a living man; and Mr. Crafford has achieved this feat. At first, however, some severe strictures must be got out of the way. The book is not easy to read, partly because it is too long for its substance. It is full of repetitions and of gossip-column trivialities, which do nothing to illuminate the character of Smuts. There is no point in saying that he visited some place and met a collection of important names, if what was said and decided is left unrecorded. If the author had lopped these suckers, he would have cleared space for quotations from speeches and details of policy which are maddeningly absent.

The second fault is the style of the book, which is poorish journalese. Mr. Crafford is Afrikaans-speaking, and writes, presumably, in a foreign tongue. He uses it correctly but flatly, as indeed General Smuts does too. There are stretches like this:

> The address was another of Smuts's holistic allocutions. From an Empire standpoint his envisagement of a completely reorientated Commonwealth in conformity with a basically changed post-war world, while entirely radical in its conception, was nevertheless indicative of sound common-sense and imaginative planning.

Still, the book is worth reading, because it is an honest account of the career of a man who, at the lowest, must rank as an outstanding politician, and who has had an uncommonly romantic life. Here he is, the delicate child who could not go to school till he was twelve, growing into a tough and tireless man, and a scholar who not only wiped the floor of Cambridge with the law-students of 1894, but has continued omnivorous reading till his old age. The vicissitudes of his life have been South African history; often enough world history. Here Mr. Crafford's account is deeply interesting. He traces the supporter of Rhodes against the Schreiners, through his development as leader of a desperately brave commando raid into the Cape Province; as Botha's lieutenant in peace-making; as Prime Minister till both the Nationalists under Hertzog and the Labour Party went out against him, and after a period out of power, as minister under Hertzog till the Second World War brought his day again. He shows the constant factors, of which the most interesting is the desire for greatness; for the physical size of dominion, which underlies both the willingness to co-operate in the British Empire, and the ambition to increase South Africa by incorporating Rhodesia, and annexing the Protectorates and South-West Africa. This capacity to see big, also explains Smuts' statements on world co-operation, and his advocacy of a Western European bloc to face the Russian colossus after this last war. As Mr. Crafford says, it is embodied in his philosophy of "holism," which seems very like an *ex post facto* rationalisation of his main political urge.

But the merit of the book is that it does not attempt to simplify Smuts into any single humour. It sets him against the background of South Africa—and indeed it is as the South African that Smuts is at his most attractive; happy in his farm, in a tin shack lined with books, walking on the veld observant of grasses and flowers. "Don't pick them! Don't pick them!" Walking, of course, is the thinker's exercise, for it acts as a sedative on the over-active mind. That asceticism, that simplicity, is peculiarly engaging in a man belonging to a country corrupted with materialism. But there is South Africa; too small a stage for a world statesman, with its petty, spiteful, personal politics. Yet only by representing South Africa could Smuts figure on the world stage; he had to deal in its politics. Mr. Crafford says that he is free from one of its vices; he is quite unspiteful, and in his cold manner, is magnanimous to his enemies. But perhaps that is due to his impersonality, which the author represents as compounded partly of a much greater interest in things and ideas than in people, and partly of contempt for the stupidity of most of his colleagues. It is this which, according to Mr. Crafford, has caused him as Prime Minister to act as a dictator; which makes it hard for him to delegate responsibility, which prompts him to treat his nation with scornful negligence, offering them any argument which he thinks they will like, evading issues with palpable prevarications, or more often with studied vagueness. One supposes that it is the imperious determination to hold power at any cost which underlies the more dubious actions of Smuts; the subservience to Unionist politics, and later to Hertzog's racialism; the favour shown to big business, especially to the Rand mine-owners

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whose money support was so useful in party politics; the deliberate choice of oligarchy. Smuts as a general ranks as able but ruthless; he treated his labour, both African and White, with a ruthlessness which has established servitude for the one and suppressed the strikes of the other with heavy bloodshed. Smuts backing the panic-stricken governor who massacred the Bondelswarts is the same who dreams of all East Africa united under the domination of the Whites; who has just been demanding from the United Nations Assembly the violation of the Atlantic Charter in the annexation of South West Africa.

Mr. Crafford, while chronicling these traits, which had the unsought effect of earning general mistrust and the title of "Slim Jan" for Smuts, nevertheless returns again and again, with a sort of exasperated admiration, to the position that the man is a genius; that he is great. This leads one to try to analyse how he is great. Clearly he has really remarkable intellectual force and power. He gives the feel of greatness, of immense strength in that dour, contained, watchful, conscious person. When he speaks on a world issue, the world listens attentively and then finds that he has said nothing it has not heard many times. The only speech quoted in this book is the address to both British Houses made in 1942. It is sensible, steadfast, prudent; it includes some of the contemporary commonplaces of post-war international planning; nothing new, certainly nothing revolutionary. This was a typical speech; I have myself listened to several, and read many. Typical of Smuts at his best, when one is apt to conclude that he is much more important than what he is saying. But he is capable of falling far below that; I shall never forget the shocking impression of his Rhodes Lecture at Oxford on Native Policy; it was not so much the cynicism of the argument as the fact that an intelligent man could stand before an audience and produce such shallow nonsense, that chilled the meeting. Again when there has been opportunity and need for great leadership Smuts has not taken it, at least since his youth. Harold Nicolson cried aloud for a prophet, for a Voice, to speak for the true values of peace at the Paris Conference this summer. He was calling upon Smuts; and Smuts only said what any politician not devoid of intelligence might have said. With presumption, I offer this view: Smuts surely is great in analytic brain-power; he can simplify a situation into its elements, diagnose a problem. When it comes to construction, he is far less masterly; partly because his mind is distorted by his greed for greatness, for the kingdoms of the earth to rule; partly because he has lowered himself too often to the mental standing of people whom he despises. The South African electorate is always at the back of his mind, with the nemesis that the unshakable position which he might now occupy is denied him. He is beyond question a politician great in determination, great in grasp of affairs, and yet somehow, not great; because he has refused to lift the heavy burden of statesmanship.

FREDA WHITE

THE INNOCENT EYE

Annals of Innocence and Experience. By HERBERT READ. *Faber.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Herbert Read came in on a wave of classicism in the 'twenties. One of his earliest literary tasks was to edit the *Speculations* of T. E. Hulme. He became formed as a poet in the Imagist school. He wrote for *The Criterion*, thus associating himself, not only with T. S. Eliot, but with didacts like I. A. Richards and Catholic outposts in the home of heresy like Eric Gill and Fr. D'Arcy. A rigorous exclusion of the light that never was and a linguistic call to order were in force. It was the time of Mr. Eliot's "objective correlate" of emotion. Mr. Read's own most conspicuous achievements have displayed what is known as a "classic" simplicity. He made his name by writing about war (*In Retreat*) and childhood (*The Innocent Eye*) without excitement or verbal excess. Even to-day he rebukes those like Mr. Desmond Macarthy who say that in poetry feeling is more important than diction. And yet from the beginning Mr. Read has called himself a romantic.

This is one of the puzzles about Mr. Read. The other (and we may presume that the two are connected) is his eclecticism—or rather the fact that, being eclectic, he nevertheless displays an exceptional steadiness of temperament. *Annals of Innocence and Experience* first appeared in 1940. Its declared purpose was to expand *The Innocent Eye* into an autobiography mainly of intellectual development. This reprint further includes *In Retreat*, coldly and beautifully describing the withdrawal from St. Quentin in 1918. And a number of chapters have been revised. In these the word "existential" betrays Mr. Read's continued word-hunger. In one key passage it has been directly substituted for another word. In 1940 we read that Mr. Read's philosophy was, "in the proper sense of the word, materialistic." To-day we read that, no less "in the proper sense of the word," it is "existential." To both versions Mr. Read supplies the same gloss, namely: "It is made actual in deeds."

Eclecticism is supposed to be a vice in philosophers. Whether it is so, could no doubt be argued. In any case, Mr. Read is not a philosopher. He is a man of letters who, because he lives in a harassed and diffident age, has been compelled to harp upon the question, "What is man?" If Mr. Read is a flirt, I suppose that to be because he finds all the goddesses of art and learning attractive. Happy eclecticism of this kind is enviable and a sign of zest. A Yorkshireman of bucolic origin and mercantile upbringing would of course find it difficult to be culturally mother-fixated. In this century all our major literary innovations (Virginia Woolf being the exception that proves the rule) have been the work either of provincials or of Celts and New Englanders. I do not think Mr. Read is a major innovator, but I think that a barbarian zest has kept him going longer and to more effect than would have been the case had he painlessly absorbed taste and learning.

At any rate, Mr. Read has escaped boredom. He has also escaped the groove of dogmatic reiteration, which lay in wait for the provincial D. H. Lawrence. Nor has he ever sold out to a party, creed or faction to such an extent that he later found himself involved in that favourite literary vaudeville turn, the spectacular recantation. In characterising his own position as romantic in literature, anarchist in politics and agnostic in religion, he takes his cue directly from Mr. Eliot. At the same time, he has carefully chosen terms which commit him only to interpretation. He might have chosen other terms. To "classicist" there is only one accepted antithesis, but to "royalist" and "Anglo-Catholic" there are several.

Of Mr. Read as novelist, art critic and youth leader, this is not the place to speak, since these considerations are absent from *Annals of Innocence and Experience*. This may itself be significant. Mr. Read has written and probably lives consciously at his own middle level. His art criticism I take to be that part of his work which is nearest to mere journalism. On the other hand, his one novel, *The Green Child*, I take to be nearest to a production of genius. The one would then be too superficial and the other too closely guarded to be normally available for discussion. The author of this autobiography is

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Children of Wrath. By EDMOND BUCHET, translated by MARJORIE GABAIN. *Collins.* 7s. 6d.
Teresa and Other Stories. By SEAN O'FAOLAIN. *Cape.* 7s. 6d.

Miss Compton-Burnett resolutely sets all her novels in a period, the end of the last century, where the scenes are not too remote to be "period" nor yet too modern to be crushed under the weight of external happenings. This does not mean that the novels are quaint. On the contrary, the themes are of such importance that Miss Compton-Burnett's novels are much more apposite to the events of 1947 than, say, Edmond Buchet's new novel which conscientiously drags in some of the 1939-40 happenings in France.

What is her theme? In *Manservant and Maidservant* the year is 1892 and Mortimer has "a strong and open feeling for his cousin, and a stronger though necessarily less open feeling for his cousin's wife." They are both over fifty. Horace Lamb, the husband and master of the house, dresses his children in shabby clothes, removes coal from the nursery fire and forbids the Christmas stocking. While cook and the butler raise their voices in religious song in the kitchen the children are sticking pins into the wax image of their father in the nursery. But Horace Lamb is not the truly dominating figure he would like to be. He does not greatly flower. There is no guilty secret in his past and he succeeds in driving only one individual, George the footman, to the point of suicide. Furthermore he is afraid of his own butler, a circumstance in itself which is enough to prepare us for Horace's betrayal of his own scale of values. When it is discovered that Mortimer plans to make off with his wife, Horace is suddenly benevolent to his children who then reward him by showing that they desire his death. The theme, then, is authority and love and how the one tends to preclude the other.

When Miss Compton-Burnett published *Pastors and Masters* in 1925 she called it not a novel but "a study." People who decide what a novel is and what a novel is not probably do more harm than good, but it is not unfair to say that in her latest book she has turned a little in her tracks. *Manservant and Maidservant* is much less a novel than *Elders and Betters* or *A Family and a Fortune*, and very much more a formal study in human values. It has great elaboration of character for the sake of character. The treatment given to Gideon, the tutor, for example, is out of proportion to his importance and there is at least one character who has no right to be mentioned at all. The book begins and ends rather self-consciously on the same subject, but this, of course, is only the writer's way of saying that though circumstances may be changed people are rarely fundamentally altered. This, however, is commentary rather than criticism and the really important thing to say is that the book is a joy from beginning to end.

Miss Compton-Burnett solves many of the problems of the contemporary writer with great firmness. Note, for example, the way she handles the passing of time. One old-fashioned method was to put in a piece of rather flat narrative or description which induces in the reader such a state of drugged melancholia that he very readily believes the first words of the next big scene, "Twelve months have passed." Miss Compton-Burnett's attitude to time lacks this reverence. In her novels time, or an act of violence, is no sooner mentioned than she springs upon it with a large mallet and sinks it into the ground like the mere tent-peg it is. Her transitions are achieved with the solidity of calculated clumsiness—calculated because upon their firmness depends the whole, pure fabric of her disconcerting genius.

It is interesting to see how a reading of *Manservant and Maidservant* affects one's appreciation of *Children of Wrath* and *Teresa and Other Stories*. One striking fact that emerges is that both Edmond Buchet and Sean O'Faolain are drawing on personal lore that arouses, in the reader, a response far different from the elation produced by the knowledge that we all share, or aspire to share, of the stripped humanity that is the material for all Miss Compton-Burnett's work. Edmond Buchet's novel is about the love-life of a psychiatrist and though it would be grossly unfair to suggest that there is anything of the text book about it, nevertheless he is making use of a stock-in-trade that is unfamiliar to *some* readers. The same is true of Sean O'Faolain. The imaginative drive behind many of his stories is supplied by an odd vibration of feeling that the author has for his Roman Catholic material: his novice going on a pilgrimage to Lisieux to find out whether she has a vocation, the junketing that took place when a number of nuns and priests went off to a remote Irish village to learn the language. These two books, then, have an extraneous interest that Miss Compton-Burnett's work lacks. As a criticism of Edmond Buchet and Sean O'Faolain this is not very important (theirs is a way of writing that came in with the Romantic revival), but it does throw a certain amount of light upon Miss Compton-Burnett who is one of the very few modern writers (Henry James was such another) who dare to lay the whole burden of their work upon the imagination.

Mr. O'Faolain's stories are designed to trouble the memory. Circumstance is lovely in itself, he seems to say—just the way the light lies on the lake as the laughter comes across the water from the hotel while the cobbler lies dead and people go here and there making preparations for the wake. All this has a beauty of its own, but a beauty that is enhanced by the greater circumstance of the silence of the valley, the never-ending sunshine, a song in Gaelic, and the eels that are being cooked for supper. It is this diffuseness of sensitive perception that marks out his best work. When he is more single-minded and his stories are under the 3,000 word mark the effect is disappointing.

Edmond Buchet's novel (admirably translated) suffers from an over-dose of Charles Morgan. The psychiatrist's wife falls in love with his best friend and is murdered by the psychiatrist's brother. The friend commits suicide but not before the psychiatrist has told him that he wants their friendship to continue; they now have an understanding of their deeper selves, and all experiences, even love, have to be outgrown. So far so good. But after that, when the psychiatrist sets out in search of that "new thing, deathless and apart" which his wife had apparently found with her lover it becomes very clear that M. Buchet is far happier writing about homicide than about love. He is not the only one. Fiction is, after all, part of the Fall of Man.

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